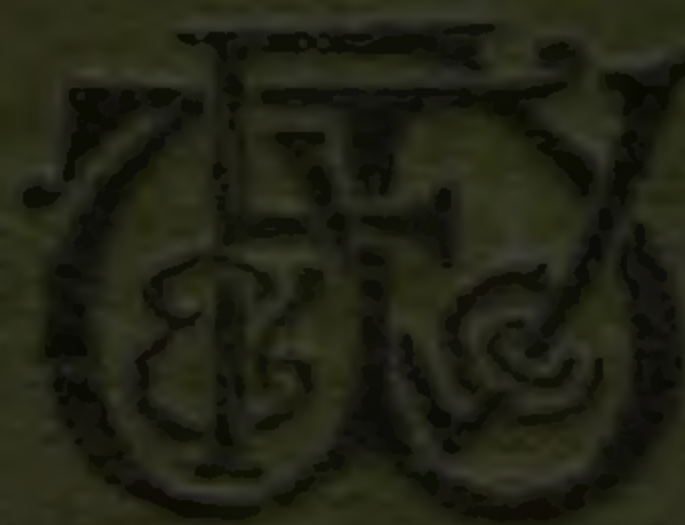


The  
LUDGATE





## **Stories from The Ludgate, Vol. 2**

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WRITTEN BY H. D. LOWRY. ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES ROBINSON

**T**HIS is one of the secrets Doris confided to the Visitor during the time of his sojourning down here. It need not have been a secret at all, but for the foolish incredulity of Ellen, who laughed at the story when it first was told her, and was manifestly insincere when, afterwards, she professed to be convinced of its truth. Doris did not really care, knowing that the evidence she possessed made her position unassailable. But she is unaccustomed to ridicule, and so a beautiful story became a secret.

You must know, to begin with, that Doris's father is a painter, and that he delights above all things in making portraits of his daughter. Moreover, as is only natural, these pictures, which give him such great pleasure in the painting, are no whit less to the taste of those for whom he works. And so Doris can hardly remember the time when she was not accustomed to sit for him.

"What a jolly dog yours is, Doris," said the Visitor one morning in the garden. "What do you call him?"

"I call him Christmas," said Doris.

"Did you get him given to you at Christmas?"

"Yes. At least——" Doris paused and looked at her companion rather

critically. "Would you like to hear another of my secrets?"

"Of course, I should," said the Visitor, and the story followed without further delay.

Last Christmas Eve, Doris was sent to bed at an unreasonably early hour. As a matter of fact, she always is; but, knowing her parents have the best intentions in the world, she usually goes quietly, after having made a merely formal protest. She did so on the occasion in question, but, having got into bed, she found it more than usually difficult to get to sleep, since she was greatly troubled with many grave cares. Of course, you do, generally speaking, get pretty well what you want (if you have duly announced your wants) at Christmas time. But it is not always so, and the things which Doris desired were so beautiful, and she desired them so much, that she was more than a little afraid she would never get them. Some, at least, she thought, would surely be missing; and her need of each was so great that she felt certain the absence of a single one would be a disappointment making imperfect her pleasure in the rest.

There had been carol-singing in the village ever since the dark evenings began, and Doris had learned many of

the Christmas songs most loved among the people. Being abed, she saw that to sleep would be the best way of passing the long hours which must elapse before the morning. And so, to quell distracting thoughts, she sang these carols softly to herself. Her cares still troubled her, however, and at last she bowed to the inevitable, ceased her singing and let herself think of them. Curiously enough, it was then she fell asleep. On that point she and Ellen are agreed: she certainly fell asleep.

But in the middle of the night she must have arisen and wandered a long way, for when she became conscious of what was going on around her she was in a place she never had visited before. Another child might have been frightened, but the place in which she found herself was a studio, and in front of her was an artist engaged upon a half-finished portrait of herself. It was all so very natural she was hardly surprised, and before she had time to wonder how she had managed to forget the way in which she got there the artist turned on her the pleasantest face that she had ever seen.

"Getting tired?" he asked. "I shan't keep you more than another ten minutes."

"I'm not at all tired," said Doris. "I don't seem to have been here more than a minute."

The artist laughed softly, and Doris liked him better than ever. "Yes," he said, "I do paint quickly, don't I? But then you are a capital sitter. Had much practice?"

"Lots!" said Doris, emphatically. "I am always sitting. I——"

"You don't like sitting?"

"Yes," she answered, but in a voice that told him that her answer would have been "No," but for her desire to spare the feelings of a comparative stranger. "But I don't think sixpence an hour is enough."

"Perhaps it isn't very much," said the painter. "And you are such an excellent sitter."

He began to work again, and once more the child was amazed at his rapidity. "Fond of singing?" he asked, pleasantly, without glancing in her direction.

"I'm going to have a really good soprano one of these days," said Doris. "At present I can't sing very loudly, but that's rather lucky, for I sing to myself a good deal when they make me go to bed.

I was singing to-night . . ." She paused, for the daylight was streaming in through the skylight, and she was not very certain about the time. "I was singing last time I went to bed," she continued, "to keep myself from thinking."

"Ah," cried the painter, "you've found it a good thing for that, have you? I find there's no plan like it. Now if you would sing me one of your carols I should paint the quicker, and you would forget that you were sitting." Doris began to sing at once. A thing which puzzles her to this day is that the song she sang was not one of the carols that were being sung in the village. The words and the music both seemed quite new to her, although she knew them perfectly, and to this day she cannot remember where and how she learned them:

*Lady Mary, in your bower  
Why weep ye sadly?  
Tall and white your lilies flower,  
All birds sing gladly.  
Mary, Lady Mary,  
What sorrow bear ye?*

*'Tis the Child that shall be born  
(Foolish thou, who questioneth),  
'Tis the crown of cruel thorn,  
And the sure-appointed death.*

*Mary, Mother, left alone,  
Why go ye gladly?  
Wherefore make ye not your moan,  
Weeping most sadly?  
Mary, Mother Mary,  
What comfort bear ye?*

The painter worked while she was singing and the child marvelled at the swiftness with which the picture progressed. When she found that she did not remember any more of that strange new song she broke into speech. "It is almost like stepping in front of a looking-glass," she said.

"What is," asked the painter.

"Being painted by you," said Doris, and the painter laughed again very pleasantly.

"I do work rather quickly, don't I? You see, I have such a lot to get through."

"Do you paint many pictures?" asked Doris.

"Whole galleries full," said the stranger, who had by this time become her friend. "I am at it all the time, and I paint all kinds of pictures: this sort of thing, and landscapes and castles—lovely, strong castles that



never fall into ruins and never get deserted, and all sorts of things. . . . I say, I wish you'd sing me another song."

Doris sang again, and still the artist painted. Presently he had finished. He looked almost idly at his picture while Doris went through the last verse of her song. When it was ended he spoke:

"You see, I've finished."

Doris darted across the room and stood looking at the picture, almost as if she had really been looking into a mirror. She was accustomed to be painted skilfully, but the celerity of this stranger left her absolutely amazed.

"You might almost be a photographer," she said.

"Well," said the artist, with a little air of being embarrassed by her flattery, "I suppose I am almost as quick. . . . By-the-bye, Doris, is there anything you want very badly?"

"Presents?" asked Doris.

"Yes," said the artist.

"I can't tell you how many things I want, and I want them all badly. It's like a box of building bricks: if one were away the others would be of little good."

"Do you expect to get them?" asked the stranger.

"Well," said Doris, confidentially, "I don't know. I generally get what I want when Christmas comes if I have told them, and of course I have done that. But, then, I have never before wanted such nice things, or so many."

The painter began to fumble among his brushes.

"For example," he said, "what do you want most of all?"

Doris meditated.

"There's a red leather music-case," she said. "I should like it to carry when I go to my music lessons."

"Ah," said the painter, "we will see what we can do. I don't think the picture is quite finished, after all. Suppose you sit for a few minutes longer? Do you mind?"

He found his favourite brush and began to paint into the picture such a music-case as Doris had described. She watched it growing on the canvas, and as it grew more and more like the object of her desire she began to envy her pictured self. Presently the artist had finished and turned to speak.

"Is that the sort of thing you——?"

But he had no time to complete the sentence. Doris uttered a little cry of joyful surprise.

"Look!" she cried.

By some strange piece of magic she was holding the red morocco case which the artist had imaged in his picture of her. It was the very thing she had been wishing for.

"Did you put it into my hand?" she asked. "You must be a better conjurer than the one we saw last Christmas."

The artist laughed his pleasant laugh.

"But I thought that one of the things you wanted would be of no use unless you had all the others as well?"

Doris remembered. What he had said was true, but she had been so delighted with the music-case for a moment that it was a grief to be reminded of the fact.

"Yes," she said, "it is true. There was a top I saw: a top which went on spinning for ever so long, and made the loveliest sort of music all the time."

"This kind of thing?" asked the painter, going back to his canvas. In a very few moments she began to see that he understood what she meant, for the top he painted into the picture was the exact likeness of the one she wanted.

"Yes," she cried, "that is what I mean." And then, while he added the finishing touches to the painting, she grew silent and listened. It seemed to her that she could hear, now that his painting of the humming-top was almost complete, the sound of its wonderful music. Of course she understood now that this man was a magic painter—probably a fairy, though he might have been an angel—but still the music puzzled her. And so she uttered a cry almost of fright when a very beautiful top, which for some few minutes past had been spinning musically on the floor beside her, ran down, and rolled under her chair noisily.

"It's you again!" she said. "I wish you would come to my party."

"Oh," answered the painter. "I think it's both of us together. But you may as well tell me the other things, mayn't you?"

"If you don't mind," said Doris, and one after another she told him what were the presents she had been desiring. One by one he added them to the portrait he had painted of her, and each, as





"SHE FOUND HERSELF IN A STUDIO"





"SHE OPENED HER EYES"

its likeness was completed, appeared miraculously in her hand, or on her chair, or even on the floor at her side. There was quite a pile of beautiful things at last. Doris had begun to be very much delighted, and he did not need, having finished one addition to the picture, to ask her what he should paint next. She told him. But at last she had nothing to say, although it was easy to see that there was something lacking.

"Is that all, then?" asked the painter, turning with brush in hand. "It doesn't seem many."

"No," said Doris, "there is another. But——"

"But what?" demanded the painter, when she paused again.

"It's a dog, I want," she said. "I'm sure you can't do that."

"You see," said the painter, and in a few moments the loveliest long-haired Skye-terrier in the world began to appear on the canvas.

Doris was delighted. "How did you know that the dog was to be one of that kind?"

"Was it?" said the painter. "I sup-

pose I must have guessed. You know, I'm rather good at guessing. It isn't a bad dog, is it?"

Doris did not answer. The picture of the dog was almost finished, and she was wondering how the real animal would make its appearance. The stranger painted on, making it lovelier and lovelier every moment; and suddenly there was a dog on Doris's lap, jumping up to lick her face and barking as a dog only can bark when it has found its dear mistress at last after being lost a long while. And as Doris tried to quiet it, so that she might thank the painter, she suddenly opened her eyes and found herself in bed.

How she got there she could never tell, for she had brought all her presents with her, and the dog was on her bed, barking and kissing her face as it had been doing when the painter and his studio disappeared. In a moment Doris was out of bed, and going, the dog at her side, to her father's and mother's room. Curiously enough, although the morning was full early, her father was not asleep. On the contrary he was standing half-dressed at the bedside. He turned as Doris entered. "Hullo, Doris!" he said: "Are you awake so early?" Then the dog dashed forward as if to make his acquaintance. "Why, you've got a dog!" he said. "Where have you gone wandering in the night?"

Doris did not know, and although her father described to her the personal appearance of every artist that he knew of dwelling within a radius of twenty miles, he still hit on no one who bore the least resemblance to the man to whom she had been sitting. "Perhaps he's a new man," he said. "If so he's pretty sure to call round one of these days. By the way, did you remember to thank him?"

"Of course I did," said Doris; "but the dog was jumping up and licking my face, and before I could quiet him I found myself in my bed. But all the things he painted on the picture were there upon my bed, and the dog was still barking and



"THE LOVELIEST SKYE-TERRIER"



licking my face. So it can't have been a dream."

"Of course not," said her father. Then his voice and his face changed together. "Why it is Christmas Day!" he said to Doris's mother. "Where are our presents for Doris?"

The mother had been very quiet while Doris was telling her story. Even now she did not speak at once. Then, "We must get her something nice when Christmas is over and the shops are open again," she said, not attempting to explain how it was she had forgotten the Day of which she had been talking not many minutes before Doris went to bed.

Doris was almost grieved. "To think you should forget! Still, it came all right, for the painter gave me everything

I wanted. I don't believe there'll be anything left for you to give me but chocolates." Then she went back to her room, and in a few minutes was telling the story to Ellen, who came to dress her. Ellen, as you are aware, behaved unworthily; but it really didn't matter. Her foolish incredulity only made Doris fonder of the gifts of the Magic Painter, and everyone who has since been trusted with the secret of how they came to Doris has agreed that to say she dreamed the whole story would be to talk absurdly.

"You can't dream things and find them on your bed when you wake," said Doris to the Visitor.

"I'm afraid not, Doris," said the Visitor. "And yet one goes on dreaming."





# A Human Vivisection.

WRITTEN BY ARABELLA KENEALY.

ILLUSTRATED BY W. BAYES.



## I.

“GENTLEMEN,” the Professor said, “we shall this evening carry our scientific investigations to their logical conclusion.”

One of the quintet of students grouped about him thrust out a hand with a gesture of protest. The others turned in his direction with white faces. The Professor bent the coldness of his eyes upon them in a scrutiny that froze.

“Still the traditions of the nursery,” he said with icy tongue. “Gentlemen are you yet infants? Or are you men and scientists?”

The protestant dropped his hand with a sigh that was half a groan. The other men faced round like soldiers at the beat of drum.

“So so!” the Professor commented. “But a moment of weakness. When we first shave and nick our chins we are disposed to cast aside our razors, and go through life barbarians. Gentlemen, we have been barbarians too long. We have capered on the outer edge of knowledge—superstitious clowns, priest-ridden savages—too many centuries. A man is born—he lives—he dies. He was not—he is—he will not be. That is the life-history of any human entity. A combination in certain proportions of Carbon, Hydrogen, Nitrogen, Oxygen, and sundry other unimportant elements—he is but a combination somewhat more complex than with the limited resources of our day we have so far been able to produce in the laboratory. That which we know as man is eternal, is indestructible by reason that the matter of which he is composed is indestructible. But it is in his ultimate principles of Carbon, Hydrogen, Oxygen, and Nitrogen that he is everlasting. As man he is a mere ephemeral phenomenon—an eccentricity—a freak of nature.

From the scientific standpoint it cannot be of the smallest consequence to an individual compound, or to other compounds of the same *genus*, whether the elements of which he is composed exist in combination or dissociate. He may be equally happy—to use a conventional phrase—in the form of an atom of carbon as he may be in that of a Czar or a Prime Minister. Gentlemen, in the course of our researches, we do not hesitate to reduce to its constituent elements any other chemical or physiological compound. Shall we then hesitate because a particular compound chances to be more organically complex—for that reason more scientifically interesting? We merely free elements which sooner or later will be freed without our agency. And as ‘sooner or later’ are terms of no scientific significance, they are terms we are at liberty to disregard. Admitted that it is lawful—gentlemen, I am now arguing from the standpoint of vulgar prejudice—admitted that because man is a higher animal, therefore a lower one may properly be sacrificed to instruct, to amuse him, or to alleviate his pain, we come logically to the axiom that because one man is less educated, less useful, less physically perfect, or in some other way inferior to his fellows, he may properly be sacrificed for the instruction, amusement, or benefit of those fellows. Or, further, that out of a hundred men equally valuable, one may be sacrificed; or out of ten—or even five—a unit may be sacrificed. For my own part, gentlemen, I have no prejudices. If science have anything to learn, or medicine a theory to verify, I should unhesitatingly pronounce in favour of our selecting *not* the least useful, not the least perfect or highly-developed among us, but, on the contrary, the very finest and most admirable organisation at our disposal, in order that we may observe the phenomena of the human mechanism in their very best present-





"A MAN OF ESSENTIALLY DEGENERATE TYPE"

ment. However, in deference to such prejudices as still remain to you, I have procured for our investigations this evening a man of essentially degenerate type, mentally, morally, and physically. He comes of a line of kleptomaniacs and drunkards. He himself has spent the greater portion of his life in gaol. His conditions are such that he may well be content to be resolved into his elemental principles, where as a molecule of oxygen or carbon he will be harmless, painless, and without hunger or alcoholic thirst. In deference further to your sentiments—for I regret to see still in some of you a lack of that intellectual composure without which such researches as ours can never be prosecuted to a successful issue—I have ascertained that our subject has no ties of wife or child. Mr. Savage, there is brandy

behind you on the table. Perhaps it would be well for such of the class as have misgivings to fortify themselves. The cardiac centres are in some cases still under the reflex influence of sentiment and superstition—transmitted, doubtless, on the maternal side. No, I thank you, Stevens, I will not take anything. I may possibly need to address you again, and I find fluid liable to set up irritation of the larynx. Gentlemen, if you are ready, I will ring now for our subject."

The hand of the former protestant again went out in deprecation. He turned a sick face on the master.

"You can retire if you like, Savage. Only remember, in the present state of public feeling, you are bound to secrecy."

"No, no, I'll see it through," the other muttered.

The Professor pressed an electric push.

## II.

A MAN entered. The Professor had kept strictly within

the truth as regarded the unfitness of the subject. Only a glance was needed to show this. He was stunted and crook-legged, with shelving brows and bullet head. His hair was stubbly, coarse, and short. His eyes were dull and bloodshot. He breathed heavily and reeked of beer. He seemed abashed as he shambled awkwardly into the clean electric light and into the presence of six black-coated, well-groomed "swells." He removed his greasy cap, and stood blinking his lids in the glare, fidgeting from foot to foot. Then, as the men remained staring at him, and the Professor proceeded to take off his coat and roll his shirt-sleeves up, he ventured huskily:

"Evenim', gemmen. At yer serviss, I'm sure gemmen."

One of the students started forward.



and crossing the room laid a hand on the Professor's arm.

"What does he think?" he demanded, hoarsely.

The Professor turned his eyes. The student shivered.

"I should say," he said, "that in his case the cerebrum is incapable of any process worth the name."

The student's fingers shook and half fell away from their grasp.

"What has he had?" he asked irresolutely.

The Professor shifted his arm from beneath the other's hold, and took up his mackintosh overall.

"Pooh!" he said indifferently. "He's had a ten-pound note and six weeks drunken debauchery."

"Good Heavens!" the other broke out, and went back to his place.

The greasy cap in the hand of the "subject" began to fidget nervously. In the shadeless glare of the electric light you could have seen a rhythmic motion of his coarse nostrils as he swelled his chest for courage. He loosed a scarlet neckerchief about his throat. His bloodshot gaze was glued to the Professor. Some instinct had hold of him. He glanced at the door; but the door had been locked, and over it a wadded curtain dropped. Had he looked more closely he would have seen that there was not an inch of the room but was thickly padded. From a distant corner came the sound as of a creature sighing—now breathing in, now breathing out, as in some dire distress. But the cold light flooded everywhere, and there was no living creature whence the sighing issued. Yet you could hear it—now breathing in, now breathing out, in husky respiration. No gentle rhythm of lung, as in sleep or quiet waking, but the harsh mechanical succession of expiration on inspiration heard when the act of breathing no longer warms the chilling blood, but is the merest echo of a life's habit. The subject smothered an imprecation. He jerked his cap spasmodically in the direction of the sound.

"Summun breathin'?" he interrogated, with an ashen face. The Professor, bending above the last button on the front of his mackintosh overall, straightened himself and glanced round.

"Will somebody kindly switch off that respiratory pump?" he requested blandly, "we shall not need it yet."

One of the students walked over to the corner. His hands were busy for a moment. The last breath swelled, sobbed, and broke in a muffled shriek. Then all was silence.

It were as though a life had gone out. The subject took two instinctive steps across the room—away from the corner and nearer the Professor.

"By Gord!" he laughed nervously, "but's funny. I tuk it fur summun breathin'."

"Savage," the Professor said, and his tones were level as ice, "unlock the safe and take out cases one and five. It is not necessary to open them," he interjected in a lower voice.

### III.

"Now then my man," addressing the subject, "strip to the shirt. And look sharp, there's a good fellow, it is getting late."

The subject shifted from one foot to the other. He laid his cap before him on the floor. He moistened his lips with a dry tongue. He coughed.

"No larks, gents," he said, "bargin was I wasn't to feel nothink uv it."

"Oh, that was the bargain was it?" the Professor commented, turning his back as he tested the sharpness of something against his nail.

"Yes. Ye see 'twas like this, gemmen. Chap come along and sez he, a clappin' me on the back, 'Want a ten-pun note, Bill?' sez he. 'Not me,' I sez 'I've jest got back from marryin' the Barness Burdy Coots and me weskit's as full o' million-pun notes as a hegg's o' meat.' That was oney my larks, gents, cos I fencied 'is was larks, cos I've never in aw my life know'd ten-pun notes a floatin' round like butterflies. Then I sez seriouser, 'Wot's the resk?' cos I know'd, ov course, if ten-pun notes fly round like butterflies they ain't to be copped uthout burnin' yer fingers. 'Nare a resk at all,' sez he, 'oney gemman's 'eerd on yer in the pappers—a cove gets in the pappers wen he's onfortnet gents—an he wants to git a squint uv yer brain to write a book about.' 'Urt?' sez I. 'Not a bit uv it,' sez he. 'Done' sez I, cos I'd eerd uv gemmen mikerscopin' fellers and weighin' em and photygraphin' em and takin' their finger-ends in wax and uvver queer does. There ain't a tanner left uv that



there ten-pun note, but ere I'm, not wishin' to do a dirty trick by a gemman as is free wi' ten-pun notes and moughtn't forgit a cove wen it was all over——"

"That will do my man," the Professor interrupted. "Get out of your things and don't talk so much."

"Awright mister," the subject said, unbuttoning his coat, "though wy yer can't see a chap's brain as he stands gits me."

He was soon undressed and stood before them in a shirt which was fringed with a vandyke of rags at wrists and throat.

"Best linnings bein' got up, gents," he apologised, with a half-abashed impudence; "and I warn't togged out for kimp'ny."

He seemed to get courage as he talked. He looked from one to another, taking each into his confidence with a waggish ruffianism. He had an air of finding the "gemmen" affable, although they did not say much. He pulled his rags down over his misformed limbs. The Professor had been right in characterising him as a degenerate. His knees knocked. His shins bowed. His wrists bulged under the ragged edges of his sleeves.

In his shirt he was a mere caricature of a human thing.

"Get on that table," the Professor said, pointing a long, white finger.

The subject again showed signs of apprehension. His teeth chattered. He took up his red neckerchief and tied it dilatorily about his throat. It was cold standing there in his thin shirt. And he was gaining time.

"I wasn't to be 'urt," he appealed, hoarsely.

"You are going to have something to put you to sleep."

"Chloryform?" he demanded.

"Chloroform," the Professor assented.

"I say, you'll see me through it, mister," the other urged, in a slightly shuddering voice. "I ain't a-goin' to be 'urt?"

"I'll see you through it," the Professor promised.

The subject scrambled on to the table.

"A ten-pun note's a ten-pun note," he apostrophised, "but a cove's got to think uv 'is skin."

"The strap on the left," the Professor said. "If you cannot do it, Savage, I will go round and adjust it myself."

The man sat up. Shudders ran shivering through him.

"See 'ere, gents," he expostulated, "I ain't got to be strepped down like a 'orse. Giv ye me oath I won't kick."

Somebody brought a blanket and folded it over him. Somebody caught his hands and somebody caught his feet. A thong tugged tight across his chest. He could not move. His head seemed bound in iron. A cloth covered his eyes.

"It's all right, good fellow," somebody said in his ear. "Just breathe this in quietly and you'll be asleep in a few minutes."

"Wot makes their phizes all so yallery wite?" the subject questioned dreamily. It was rather pleasant. Warm hands were about him. The blanket comforted him. Something tasted sweet on his tongue. He felt no inclination to stir. He lay in a kind of stupor. Suddenly he heard a dog howl—a slow-drawn, agonised howl. A muffled voice—a voice which sounded a long way off—observed:

"It's that collie again. Stuff a beef lozenge down its throat. Or, I say, Savage, spike its medulla. We've had three days on it already. It isn't worth much."

He started struggling. He felt choked. The thong across his chest cut into him. Cords galled his wrists and ankles. Then a horrible and mortal terror fell upon him. But the power of escape had gone. His limbs and tongue were numbed.

"I say," he muttered brokenly, "see me through it, gents. I've been a bad un, but there's a gell as b'lieves in me, and mebbe—and mebbe a kid on its way."

In his stupor it seemed to him there was a sudden altercation. In that which sounded like a scuffle, the mask over his face was half torn off. There was a blaze of light. Men's voices were raised in dispute. Then he heard one man's voice speaking coldly on a sudden silence. It hissed in his hot ears. Again there was silence. He seemed to be breaking slowly out of a dream. He muttered, and tried to call. The light grew stronger; he was coming to. They hadn't lied, then; he was coming to, and he hadn't been hurt. What a funk he'd been in—the swells must have thought him a milk-liver! The hissing speech stopped. Then a long breath broke above him in a sob. How mortal queer it all was. He tried



"THE POWER OF ESCAPE HAD GONE"

to strike out. They were blinding the light away again; it was dark, and something clung tight over his face. Did he shout? He meant to shout, but could not hear himself. Where were they throwing him? He was dead, and they were throwing him into a pit. Down, down—the air whistled round him. Gord! what a cropper he'd come when he got to the bottom! All at once he ceased

from falling; he was swimming. The water was about him; it lapped him gently, gurgling in his ears. He couldn't get his breath; he choked. It scalded his throat and nostrils. He was drowning—drowning—drowned. Blackness and nothingness. Then he leapt like a wild thing in the air. Was this hell? God help him! He had never been bad enough for this—no one had ever been



bad enough for this! A searing flame had torn his body down from throat to waist. Hot hands were tearing out his vitals; molten metal scorched him. God help him! He'd been a bad 'un—yes, he'd been a bad 'un, s'elp 'im, but he'd never been bad enough for this. Let it be remembered for him that, with all his badness, he had never taken life.

## IV.

THE lung-pump was at work. The husky rhythm of its gasp, swelling and emptying, sounded desolately. Something seemed to have gone wrong with it. It wheezed and laboured with a weird disquietude. The chest walls had been thrown back and the blood sponged up. Yet was there a constant ooze of weeping scarlet. The purple lungs lifted and fell laboriously. The heart in its membranous bag pulsed faintly. The room was shrouded in a steamy vapour, which, pouring from a long-spouted kettle, made fantastic clouds. Through these the scientists showed intent and silent, with beads of moisture in their hair and beards. Only two remained—the Professor and the Chloroformist—three, if you count the Thing on the table. As the others one by one had stolen out the Professor had lightened upon their sickened faces out of his steel eyes.

"Dolts!" he had sneered, his fingers busy at their task; "they are always like this the first time. Did they think it would be pretty?"

The Chloroformist stood firm. The finger of his one hand lay on the congested wrist. With the other he lifted the eyelid from minute to minute with a desperate intentness, testing sensation on the surface of the eyeball. At intervals he dropt fresh chloroform into his cone.

"The body is niggardly of its secrets," the Professor said; "we shall not easily find what we seek."

He touched the heart apex roughly with the handle of his scalpel. It leapt and palpitated like a frightened thing.

"Reflex action still good," he murmured; "we ought to get at something."

He switched off the pump. The lungs sank slowly, then rose and sank again. Their rhythm became of the faintest.

You could scarcely see them lift. The blue wrist under the Chloroformist's hand grew bluer. The eyeballs blackened. The pulse waned.

"Thank Heaven!" he muttered.

"Let him go!" he said aloud. "For God's sake let him go. I can't hold on much longer."

The Professor stared up frigidly. A sneer froze on his face.

Presently he switched the apparatus on again. The lungs filled harshly. They swelled with a sigh. The former breathing strength was gained. The skin got back its colour. The pulse waxed. The Chloroformist drew a hand across his eyes.

"What a devil he is," he mumbled. "But whatever happens I mustn't give up."

"Pulse still good?" the Professor queried.

"Good" was the laconic answer.

"The fellow's a bad specimen. I'm afraid we shall not make much out of him."

A minute later.

"Stop the chloroform!"

The Chloroformist looked him in the face.

"The chloroform. Stop the chloroform I say."

"What a devil he is," the Chloroformist mumbled again.

"Pooh!" the Professor said. "I thought you better seasoned."

The Chloroformist dropt fresh chloroform.

"I'm not enough seasoned for that," he retorted. The chloroform bottle was in his hand. As he re-stopped it, the Professor, with a rapid movement, jerked it from his grasp. It fell on the floor and smashed into a hundred pieces. An odour sweet, merciful and benign ascended on the air.

"So I relieve you of all responsibility," the Scientist said with a sardonic laugh. The Chloroformist stared, choked and stuttered. Then he burst weakly into a passion of tears.

"Why Grimston," the Professor said, "what a fool you're making of yourself. Now we shall test the heart's action under the influence of pain."

## V.

THE Professor buttoned his coat about him as he came briskly down the steps.

"Cool night," he commented. "I should say the mercury stands below thirty."

The man behind him shuddered. His hands shook as with rigorous cold when he turned into the street. Yet his coat was flung wide, and he took off his hat and held a white face to the air. He reeked of brandy.

A young woman huddling on a doorstep opposite crept across the road.

"It must a' bin 'ere," she said half to herself.

Then she turned up a face that showed frigid and pinched under the gas-lamp.

"'Xcuse me, gents," she faltered through her chattering teeth, "but it's 'alf-past three, and are you quite done wi' my Bill?"

The man with the sick face clutched a railing. The Professor moved a step in front of him. He stood a moment scanning the shivering creature.

"I am afraid we have not the pleasure of your Bill's acquaintance," he said banteringly.

The girl cried out. Her lips dragged at the corners.

"Ain't you seen 'im?" she stammered. "He said he was comin' 'ereabouts to some gents. I've been watchin' the light this two hours, thinkin' 'twas 'ere."

After a pause, during which she stared round like one stunned, "Ain't you seen 'im?" she repeated. "He's a big-built,

fine-lookin' feller, sir—my Bill. Dark eyes and a red neckcher."

"Ah!" the Professor said, "you'll find he has gone home. It is nearly four o'clock."

The girl broke out in a frantic fit of sobbing. "He's not gone 'ome. I'm



"HAVE YOU SEEN MY BILL?"



'fraid he's got into mischief agen, and got took. And he promised me he wouldn't never any more."

The Professor shook his head. "Most men are liars, my good woman," he said smoothly. "Good night!"

But the girl had rushed sobbing away. The Professor caught his companion's arm. "Come, come, Grimston!" he said, sharply, "pull yourself together! You know as well as I do it is merely a question of being the first time."

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### FAILURE.

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WE have not done so very well,  
 We, who were so wise,  
 If, after all, the shadow lies  
 Upon our hearts, and in our eyes.  
 We somehow missed, 'twixt Heaven and Hell,  
 The brighter tale there was to tell—  
 We, who were so wise!

We did not climb so very far,  
 We, who were so strong.  
 Full soon we sighed, "The road is long;  
 Give over; hush the comrade song;  
 And leave our happiness afar  
 Above our heads, a virgin star"—  
 We, who were so strong!

We did not dare much, or achieve,  
 We, who were so great.  
 Had we not faith to strive and wait?  
 Had we not hearts to conquer Fate?  
 Nay, let us cease; depart; and leave  
 The unattained. But shall we grieve?  
 We, who were so great?

WILLIAM MUDFORD.

# *Some Experiences of Lord Syfret.*

BY ARABELLA KENEALY.

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## I.—THE HAUNTED CHILD.

ILLUSTRATED BY W. BAYES.

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**A**T forty I had exhausted all the resources of civilised life. I had health, wealth, and position, yet I knew that unless I could devise some new expedient for passing time suicide would be my last sensation. As to whether suicide were justifiable or not I did not concern myself. I was bored and I did not purpose to continue being bored. Exploring my mental reserves I lighted upon a vein which, suitably worked, might profit me. I set about working it. So far I have done so successfully. Once more life is tolerable, occasionally exhilarating.

The vein is an insatiable and absorbing interest—curiosity—call it what you will—in other people's lives. Fiction has no charm for me. I am always conscious that its personages are but printer's ink. And I like my pages of story wet with the ink of life. I meet a man or a woman whose appearance or conditions stir me. By the expenditure of a little ingenuity, some trouble, and more or less hard cash, that person's story lies in my hand. Aided by a staff of well-drilled agents, whose duty I have made it to shadow in one capacity or another the fortunes of such persons as roused my curiosity—I am enabled to read their stories like a book. And, I tell you, few romances approach in interest some of the realities I have thus been able to trace. My right to peer into my fellows' lives may be denied. I myself have never considered the question. To do so amuses me. That is sanction enough for my morality.

It has occurred to me to record a few of the stories I have chanced upon. That thus set down they will interest others as they interested me who watched them as they were wrought in the forge of life I do not pretend. Yet they may serve for entertainment. As already stated my concern is purely psychological, or, if you prefer a simpler term, impertinent curiosity. With the right or wrong of things I do not meddle.

Only in exceptional cases do I even trouble to put the law on the track of murder, though, in the course of their activities on my behalf, my agents should witness the commission of such a crime. For my part I prefer the delinquent to escape, that I may find, as I do, penalty closing in on him as an indirect consequence of his action, rather than that it shall take the clumsy form we dignify by the title of justice. Far crueller, subtler, and a hundredfold more fitting to a particular crime are the methods whereby time, character and circumstance enmesh the criminal. Expedient it may be to rid ourselves of the confessedly vicious. But the Powers which are moulding us to ends our finite minds have so far failed to grasp are neither assisted in their ultimate objects nor appeased in their far-reaching wrath—so to put it—by our crude expedients. The long arm of development which encompasses the human family and places effect in the unerring train of cause will find the murderer, many years it may be after we have done with him, but find him it will as inevitably as the impulse given to pool by pebble laps the shore.

How can it reach him after death? you ask. Death is but change of identity. Entities in the school of evolution pass through myriad lives in training for eternity, and the ill acts of one existence may not find expiation until a later one. A theory, you say. A theory, I admit. But I ask you for another that shall equally explain the inexplicabilities of human life. I have a story illustrative of my theory. Read into it any other interpretation that you will, and judge if it apply as mine does.

\* \* \*

In a cottage on one of my estates a gamekeeper lived, some ten years since, with his young and pretty wife. He was middle-aged and morose, considering, as does many another, that the one cardinal virtue he practised—in his case that of



honesty—absolved him from the obligation of practising any of the minor amenities and amiabilities of life. Nobody could imagine by what sorcery or fortuitous concomitance of accidents he had persuaded pretty Polly Penrose to mate with him. He had saved a certain

so they let the matter drop. Cooper was but one of Polly's "whimsies."

It is probable I should never have concerned myself with Polly's affairs had I not one day come upon her crying her eyes out in a wood. On seeing me, she blushed and stole away. Matters just



"STRUCK HIM WITH THE BUTT-END OF HIS GUN"

sum of money, for to other unlovable qualities he added that of screw. Polly had swains better circumstanced than he, however, so that this offered no solution of the problem. The village wondered, chattered, and finally decided that "you could nivver calculate on what gells do, for they're chock full o' whimsies;" and

then were dull with me. I had no other case on hand; and, without anticipating much result, idly determined to trace the cause of Polly's tears. I had, among my agents, a girl of about her age and temperament; and, putting her to lodge in the village, she soon made Polly's acquaintance. It came out then that

Polly had married for pique. There was a certain stalwart sweetheart of hers—another of my keepers—of whom she was fond, but he rousing her jealousy by attention to a rival, in a fit of temper she accepted Cooper. To make a long story short—for this is but a preface—Polly and her lover made it up again too late, for Polly was then Mrs. Cooper.

Polly was a good girl, and I do not believe Cooper had any substantial reason for complaint, as she saw Dell but rarely. But she grew pallid and depressed. Occasionally she was seen with Dell. The circumstances reaching Cooper's ears, with doubtless some embellishment, there was trouble in the cottage. Cooper even went so far as to strike her. In her fear and agitation—the poor girl was soon to be a mother—she fled to Dell.

Cooper, following, found her in a shed near the latter's cottage. From words the men passed to blows, and eventually Dell struck Cooper over the head with the butt-end of his gun. Whether he meant murder or not, who can say? but a long acquaintance with the poor fellow makes me confident the impulse was momentary and uncontrollable. But murder it turned out. Cooper's skull was fractured and he died in a few hours.

Dell made no effort to escape. His one fear seems to have been for Polly. He remained with her in the cottage, soothing and re-assuring her till he was handcuffed and taken to gaol. I did all I could on his behalf. I even had the gaol-lock tampered with. I had an instinct of what would happen should his case come to trial, and hanging was the last death for the fine young fellow he was.

I was a magistrate and could easily have contrived his escape. But the blockhead would not take his liberty. He could not now marry Polly he said, and he did not care for life.

A thick-skulled jury, directed by a judge who on the Bench was as keen a stickler for the proprieties as off the Bench he was obtuse about them, put the worst—and, I believe, the false—construction on Dell's and Polly's fondness. He was convicted of murder, and sentenced to death. Under the circumstances, it was a monstrous sentence. There had been assuredly no premedita-

tion, and his provocation was great. We petitioned the Home Secretary; we petitioned Parliament. We might have spared our signatures and ink. When Dell's time came he was hanged. And now comes the gist of my story.

I filled up the places left vacant by Dell and his victim, putting in two keepers from a distance. There was a strong local feeling against the occupation of either of the cottages. Presently it was rumoured that the shed wherein the murder had occurred was haunted. But the new keepers, unaffected by the tragedy which to them was merely hearsay, pooh-poohed the rumour.

Curiously enough, the wife of one turned out to be a distant cousin of Dell's. She was a buxom person, strong-nerved and braced with common sense. She scoffed at ghost-talk.

"Depend on it, your lordship," she said once to me, "there's a deal more to be afear't on in the livin' than the dead; and as long as it's noboddy comin' to meddle wi' Johnson's belongings, why, let the poor things, if things there be, come an' go as it pleases 'em."

I mention this to free my story from an implication to which it may presently seem open. Mrs. Johnson was as unimpressionable a woman as could be, and was as little affected by the talk of ghosts as she would have been by their apparition.

Now the ghost which was said to walk and to have been seen by more than one person, was not, as I have gathered is the way of ghosts, the shade of the murdered man, but that of his murderer. All who had caught the fleeting glimpse—which is as much as the ghost-seer generally permits himself—agreed that the apparition haunting the wood-shed was Dell's. Round and round in a restricted circle, skirting the space whereon a ghastly form had stretched, the ghost was seen to pass. Its head was bent, its face leaned down. Its eyes stared, frozen with horror. Moans and sighs of the direst distress were heard to issue from the shed. But the man from whom I had a description, a tramp who, unwitting of its reputation, had stolen there one rainy evening for the purpose of a night's lodging, described the thing he saw as mute and noiseless, making a dumb and ceaseless circuit of the floor. To him the circuit taken by the apparition was but a stretch of dusty



boards, but the stark horror in the shadow's eyes told of some ghastly visibility.

The man was green with fright. He had lain there staring nearly all the night, afraid to move, afraid almost to breathe, lest he should turn the horror of the eyes upon himself. He painted in the vivid speech of panic the curious effect of morning: how as the light grew, it left less and still less of the apparition visible, how from being something luminous against the darkness it passed into a thin translucent shade against the light, how the outlines slowly faded and the form was lost, yet he could see it whirling like a grey smoke round and round six feet of floor. When the sun came up it slipped away as mist slips into air. In the morning when the man was brought to me he was piebald. The hair and beard of one side had gone white in the night.

A time came when the ghost was seen no more. The sighs and moanings ceased. Still the shed lost no whit of its evil reputation.

A year after the Johnsons' advent to the cottage, a child was born to them. They had already several children—buxom, cherry-cheeked youngsters, after the type of their mother. This child was different. The difference did not show at first. The infant was as other infants—a mere homogeneous mass of red-pink flesh, with the slate-grey eyes of its kind; eyes that deluded mothers call dark or light according to their fancy, for the rest of the world perceives that not until long after seeing the light do babies' eyes take on the shade they eventually keep. But this infant, though like enough to others, differed from them in one particular—it had a large blood-red spot in the palm of its right hand. The doctor pronounced the spot merely accidental and ephemeral; it would disappear before the week was out. Subsequently he modified his opinion. It was a variety of *nævus*, but he considered that it did not call for operation. The child would outgrow it. But the

doctor was wrong. As the palm grew the blood-spot grew, and its colour did not wane. Presently, when the child assumed with age the waxen whiteness that afterwards characterised it, the spot had a curious effect of focussing all the blood in its body. As the baby slowly evolved an individuality out of



"AFRAID TO MOVE"

its pink homogeneousness, it was seen to differ singularly from the rest of the Johnson children. In the place of their fair chubbiness, it was pallid and dark. Its brows were strongly and sombrely marked, and its eyes gathered slowly a look of weird horror. It cried rarely or never. Nor did it smile. It sat staring before it with a fixed expression and a blood-red palm upturned.

A child is born with its hands knotted into fists, fists which for months are opened with difficulty. It is an instinctive action of grasping the life before it. A man or woman dies with the palms extended. The life has been wrought and is rendered up. The Johnson baby never curled its fists as normal babies do. It held its palms limply open with the

blood-red spot for all to see. The villagers talked as villagers always talk of something out of the common. They drew conclusions—the short-sighted conclusions of their kind. They pronounced the child's uncanniness a judgment on the mother for her scoffing.

"It don't do to make light o' they things," they croaked. They predicted the baby's early death. The child attracted my attention from the first. I got a curious impression about it. Its face had a familiar look. The horror in its eyes reminded me of something. It was not until later that I knew of what.

I had a vacant cottage near. In it I installed an elderly woman of observant faculty. She made friends with the mother, and having leisure took the infant frequently off her hands. By her means I am able to relate what happened. So soon as it showed signs of intelligence—signs such as those used to children interpret, while to others they are still meaningless—the Johnson baby developed interest in the haunted shed—now, it must be remembered, no longer haunted.

The moment it was taken out of doors its eyes turned in the direction of the building, that stood but a short distance from the cottage. It was restless and wayward out of sight of it, and would weary and fret with inarticulate demands until carried whence it could see it. So soon as it was able, it would drag itself along the floor and out at the door to sit there with hands on tiny knees, staring with fascinated looks.

Before it was ten months old, it was found, having crept across the patch of ground between the house and shed, tired with its efforts, lying extended on the grass, its waxen face turned solemnly upon the building, its eyes fixed. Later it managed to escape attention long enough to reach the shed, shuffling along as infants do on hands and legs. It was discovered crouching at the open door, its head dropt till its chin rested almost in its lap, its pupils wide upon some portion of the floor. An illness followed, and for some weeks the child's life was in danger. It had taken a chill, the doctor said. Even then, though weakened with fever, the poor little creature left for a moment, would struggle feebly to the foot of the bed, whence through the window a corner of the shed was visible. There it would be

found staring with grave, frightened eyes.

When strong enough to be up again it made always for the window, to stand there with its face pressed close against the glass. The doctor diagnosed the child as weak-minded, but I cannot say the term at all described the terrible intelligence that looked out of its eyes. The women shook their heads.

"It knows too much, poor little dear," they said. "There isn't nothing that's said it don't know. If anybody could find out what it's always askin' in its eyes per'aps it ud be able to die quiet, for anybody can see it ain't long for this world."

Mrs. Johnson paid but little heed to all the talk.

"I don't see anything much different in the child from other children," she said impatiently, "only it don't thrive. I expect it 'll be stronger on its legs when it's got its teeth and can take a bit o' meat wi' the rest of us."

But the child grew no stronger on its legs, nor did it grow the least bit less unlike the chubby-cheeked Johnson brood. It seemed to have no wish to walk. It was a patient little thing, and when planted by a chair would stand there; but so soon as attention was drawn from it, it would drop to its hands and knees again, and creep to the door.

Johnson made a little fence, to keep it from straying; but it developed a weird sagacity for evading this, wriggling through or clambering over, or escaping by a back door. Then, if not intercepted, it would work its way across the patch of ground till it reached the doorway of the shed. There it would sit for hours together, straining its eyes upon some portion of the floor—always the same portion. Rain, snow, or wind it minded not. Frequently it was found squatted there in the entrance, wet to the skin, with a heavy rain beating on it, to all appearance unconscious of its wet and chilled condition—its gaze and powers magnetised. It took but little food, and was a puny, miserable morsel. Such food as it took, it took mechanically and in obedience to its mother. It never seemed hungry, or interested, as babies are interested, in the sweet and edible.

It did not play, nor did it seem to have a notion of the use of toys. A doll or painted ball it would turn seriously over in its fingers, then lay aside with a





"THE VILLAGERS WHISPERED THAT IT HAD THE EVIL EYE"

quaint solemnity as though it had weightier matters on hand. Its only comfort was its thumb, which it sucked gravely, and with a thoughtful sobriety as of an old man smoking a pipe. It had no fear of darkness. It was found in the shed at dead of night, having scrambled stealthily from its cot, down the cottage stairs and out at the door. Sometimes it sat at a distance gazing spell-bound. Generally it spent its time shuffling round and round a certain area of floor dragging itself laboriously on hands and knees as one doing penance.

The villagers grew scared at it, and whispered that it had the evil eye. They would turn back to avoid passing it in the road. I have had boys thrashed for stoning it. Even its mother came to have a horror of it, with its weird ways and terrible eyes. Yet it was patient and gave no trouble, so long as it were permitted to be in the shed. Its limbs, they told me, were raw and red, from the continuous rub of the boards against its baby skin. And the nails of toes and fingers were worn to the quick with its ceaseless clambering.

That the child suffered mentally, I cannot say. Possibly not. It seemed to gather satisfaction from its treadmill labours, though there was always that horror in its eyes.

"Perhaps your lordship would be pleased to come and see it," my agent suggested one day, when I chanced to pass the Johnson cottage. "Mrs. Johnson has gone into the village. The baby was shut in, but it has got out somehow and crept to the shed."

I followed her. We went quietly; but I doubt if the child would have heard in any case, so absorbed was it. We watched it through the window. Its frock and feet were stained with the soil over which it had dragged itself. The day was damp, and mud clung about its hands. But it minded nothing. In the half-sitting, half-kneeling posture of creeping children it dragged itself sideways round and round a circle encompassing some six feet of floor—six feet in length and from three to four in breadth. Dust lay thick on the boards, so that the circuit made by it was clearly traced. It went always over the same ground, marking a curious zig-zagged shape. Round and round, now up, now down, tracing the same inexplicable course it plodded, a thick dust

rising on either side to the infantile flop of its skirts.

Its face was bent towards the centre of the trail it followed, its eyes rivetted. Sweat stood moist on its skin, and in the moisture dust clung, giving it a dark, unearthly look. It sighed and panted at its task. Every now and again it would cease from utter weariness and, sitting up, would lift its dusty frock and wipe its lips. After a minute it resumed its treadmill round. I went in. It lifted its awed and grimy countenance and looked at me with that terrible intelligence. Then it resumed its dusty way.

I took it up and sat it on a pile of wood. It whined and fretted, stretching its arms to the shape on the floor. I left it where it was, and, crossing the shed, stood looking down upon the figure it had traced. I could make nothing of it. It was an irregular oblong of indefinite form, wider to one end, narrowing to the other. A grim thought struck me that it resembled a coffin. I was interested. What was the meaning of it all? What, if anything, did those weird eyes see? I bade the woman bring some cake or sweets. She came back with an orange.

"He'll do anything for an orange," she said.

I made her take the child and set him on the floor to one side of the figure. I placed myself on the other. The oblong was between us at its widest part. I held the orange up, and beckoned him.

"Go get it!" the woman urged.

He gazed at me questioningly, as though probing my intention. His eyes rested on the orange; then something that in another child would have been a smile floated over his face. He set out, creeping toward me. I watched him intently. Would he cross that circle? He came on, shuffling slowly, raising a cloud of dust. But when he reached the further limit of the oblong, he stopped short. He turned his face down, and bent his looks on something that he seemed to see within the circle—something about the level of his eyes.

I stamped my foot and called to him. He looked up curiously but did not move. I held the orange toward him. He stretched his hand out, raising it carefully as though to prevent it coming into contact with the something that was there.

"Come," I said.



His eyes again levelled. They travelled slowly over that I could not see. Then he looked up at me, dully reproachful.

"Come," I called again, tossing the orange.

He shook his head with a grave, old-man solemnity. I stamped my foot once more.

"Come," I insisted.

His lips quivered feebly. Tears came into his eyes. Suddenly his features quickened with a new sagacity. He swerved aside and came creeping to me

Thank goodness she was in time! I looked down into his face. Poor little wretch! There was all the dumb agony of a ripe intelligence frozen on it. He clung to me strenuously, turning his rigid looks from that over which we stood. I gave him to her.

"Take him away. Get the poor little wretch out into the air. Give him the orange. Give him anything—only drive that look from his face." She took him out. He turned a shuddering head over her shoulder seeking



"THE FLOWERS STOOD AROUND HIM  
LIKE GENTLE SENTINELS"

round the outer edge of the figure he had traced, bending his looks with an awed avoidance upon that he saw there. I tried a dozen times. But he would not cross the line. He scanned me plaintively. Why did I so torment him?

I took him in my arms. I carried him toward the charmed circle. Looking back I can see that the act was a brutal one, such a brutal one as the curiosity we dignify by the terms intellectual or scientific is frequently guilty of. But the woman stopped me. She caught him out of my arms.

"For heaven's sake, don't, my lord," she gasped, "I did it once. I thought he would have died."

that spot. It was the spot where Cooper had lain. I knew it now. He had lain there stretched full length, and over him Dell had stood with stricken eyes. Heavens! Why had the child those eyes? And why had it been cursed with this terrible vision? Had re-birth come so soon? Were the retributive forces of murder thus expiating in a little child?

I stood looking down at the figure traced in dust. I thrust my stick into it. Did I really feel a dull resistance? I lowered my hand to within some inches of the floor. Was the air really chill? Pshaw! The babe had infected me. It

was but a draught from the door. As I stood my stick slipped from my hold, and sliding stopped between the curves composing the lower end of the oblong. A tree-branch, stirred by the wind, shot its shadow through the doorway immediately across the tracery. In a moment, as a few strokes put to outlines which had had no meaning gather the lines into life, so now the unmeaning tracery took shape. The stick formed a line of demarcation between extended legs, a limb of the shadow-tree lay like an outstretched arm and hand. Even for a moment convulsing features were given to a curve that might have been a face, as a flicker of twigs and fluttering leaves hurried like vanishing pencil marks across the outline. In that moment the murdered body of Cooper was reproduced as I had seen it. I am sufficiently strong-nerved. Yet I admit I turned sick. I picked up my stick and went out.

I knew now that what had been momentarily visible to me was ever before the doomed baby, that to its eyes the murdered man was always there. I felt my hair lift as though an ice-wind swept under my hat.

I had the shed pulled down. I had the ground it covered sown with flowers.

But the spot kept its old fascination for the poor little creature. He could not now drag round it, the way being barred. But he sat for hours tracing with waxen fingers something that for him lay there, something that to us was but space between flower-stalks.

I sent him to the sea, a hundred miles away. In three days his life was despaired of. His impulse in living was gone. He fell into a state of stupor. He revived when brought back. He dragged himself out to the flower-bed, and sat there crooning with a kind of plaintive content, tracing that outline with his pallid hands.

One morning they found him dead there. He had crept from his cot at some time during the night, and had scrambled in the darkness—he never learned to walk—to the old spot. Rain was falling, and he lay on his back with face upturned and wet, his fair hair limp about him. His brows were unbent and tranquil, through his half-unclosed lids at last peace looked. The flowers stood round him like gentle sentinels, their flower-cups full of rain as eyes with tears. For the first time in his life the smile of a child lay over his lips. And the blood-spot in his palm was white as wool.



# *Some Experiences of Lord Syfret.*

BY ARABELLA KENEALY.

## II.—IN A TERRIBLE GRIP.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. SAVAGE.



HAD taken a house at Dover. I detest publicity, and a case I had been dipping into threatened to come to trial, in which event I should inevitably find my name figuring in the papers. Therefore I conveyed myself and my effects to the coast, and had my yacht in readiness so that a wire from my lawyer should give me some sea-miles start of the person charged with the serving of my subpoena. I slept at Dover, going down most days by the five o'clock express. About half-an-hour out from town I observed a strange old tumble-down house standing a little distance from the railway, a house noticeable for being a curious graft of villa upon farm-house. This house had impressed itself on the outer tablets of my consciousness for some days, perhaps, before it struck deep enough to focus my attention. I know this by the circumstance that one day it remained in my memory with the clear and sharp intensity of something I had been acquainted with for years. I even found that my outer consciousness had arrived at the conclusion that the house belonged to an artist. There was a long low room built out from it, a room with complicated blinds and a large top-light—a studio to all appearance. Then I asked myself why had the house impressed me and what was my impression? As I have said, I have an instinct for a house with a history; but, unfortunately, imagination and this instinct occasionally become confused. This was a house calculated by its quaint construction to

excite the fancy. Fancy alone might be at work.

As I neared it next morning I examined it attentively. Certainly it was a charming old house, and the garden a tangle of perfume and colour. A hurried glance as we rushed past showed me the interior of the studio. There were no pictures nor sign of artistic properties. Not even an easel. Indeed, the only thing in the room was an immense chair, a chair that caught and held my attention. It stood on a platform raised from the ground. It was fitted with levers and flanges and screws of every conceivable form and shape. I put my head out of window, staring back at it. It looked like some horrible instrument of mediæval torture. Before it had passed from view I burst out laughing. Truly, my imagination was at ferment. The chair was an instrument of torture without question, but a modern one. It was a dentist's chair! Not such a dentist's chair as I had ever seen, but manifestly a dentist's chair. The annex was, then, no artist's studio, but a dentist's surgery. I decided in the evening that the dentist had retired, and had preserved this relic of his stock-in-trade possibly from some sentiment of professional pride, for the house stood a mile at least from any other houses, and these were a mere score of squalid cottages. Assuredly there was no scope for professional practice.

A man stood out on the lawn as we passed. If he were the dentist he was young to retire—young, and yet old. His hair was grey: he was thin to emaciation. He stood scanning the train with a wild gaze. He looked like a man who had sustained some mental shock. This impression was increased by the fact that a sudden shriek from the engine at the moment of passing set



his face contorting. Then he clapped his hands spasmodically over his ears, and turning, shot into the house, his coat-tails flying.

"My good sir," I reflected, "before you chose a dwelling within sixty yards of a railway you should have discovered that your nerves were not equal to the shriek of a locomotive."

A day later I was interested to see



"GOING DOWN BY THE EXPRESS"

that the dentist had a patient. The torture-chair was occupied. I could not make out much of the occupant, and strangely enough the dentist was not visible. Neither were there to be seen the table set with picks and files, nor the drill nor any of those other contrivances for anticipating the tortures of the lost, wherein the dental mind is so prolific. As we glided opposite I got a better view. The man lay back in the chair motionless and gagged, with such a look of horror in his starting eyes as was absolutely appalling. His face was livid, his hands purple and patched with white about the knuckles, as though he were straining every effort for composure.

It was evident he was undergoing mental torture of the extremest kind. Yet he lay back motionless—the convulsions of his features being the only evidence of muscular activity about him. I wondered, rather contemptuously—for after all the tortures of dentistry are not more than a man may bear—I wondered, if he felt so mortally bad about it, why he did not get up and beat a retreat. We passed so close that I learned his reason. A curious writhe and shiver of his limbs made it plain that to retreat was not in his power. He was locked in. The levers and flanges and screws had him immovable in their grip. Heavens! an ordinary dental chair were bad enough, but this one—this that locked the limbs and gagged the mouth, and held a man as in a vice—was altogether too fiendish. Again I was struck by the fact that the man was alone and that none of the paraphernalia of dentistry were about. The dentist was a cool hand indeed to leave his patient thus to his imagination.

"I say! man in a fit," my opposite fellow-passenger broke in. He leaned out of window. "Poor wretch! and nobody with him!"

He resumed his seat. "I don't think it was a fit after all," he said, thoughtfully, "his eyes were conscious."

The same man travelled with me in the evening. As we neared the house we instinctively strained our necks in its

direction. Every blind was drawn. It was like a house that had dropped its lids on a secret. My companion made a gesture towards it.

"Dead, I suppose," he said, with a little shudder. "Poor beggar! I hope they found him while he was alive."

I had it on my tongue to tell him my view, but I refrained. After all, he might be right. For surely no man ever looked like that over a tooth.

Next day the blinds were up. The chair was empty. The dentist sat in the garden. I had searched the papers vainly for a case of sudden or mysterious death. Two evenings later the chair was

again occupied. Again a man alone, convulsed and livid, lay with his gagged face turned to the window, his eyeballs starting. I could make out but little of his face for the screw and flange of the gag. But I noticed he had the wild grey hair of the man I had seen in the garden—the man I had taken for the dentist. I reconstructed my views. It was no case of dentistry. The room, after all, was a studio, the man an artist's model. The torture on his face was simulated—excellently well simulated. He was posing for some impressionist picture. Where then was the artist? And where the picture? There was neither easel, nor palette, nor even a mahl-stick. I could see every corner of the room. There was nothing in it but the chair—nobody in it but the man. I had come to the end of my imaginative patience. I would guess no longer.

The next morning I got out at the nearest station. Inquiring my way to the house, I was aware of being an object of interest, if not of suspicion. I congratulated myself. There was something to sift after all.

"You mean Massey's house," a woman answered to my queries. "Ah! poor gentleman! Up the lane and past the Spotted Corcodill, and round by Meakin's forge, and it'll be the first house you come to."

"Why do you say 'poor gentleman?'"

She shut her lips and shook her head. She tapped her forehead. Then she reeled off a string of mild invective, and darting across the road, whipped a small son of hers out of the gutter, and applied a palm in forcible and rapid iteration to the side of his face. I am sensitive to discordant sound. I hastened on, pondering how it came about that a woman could have in the same moment sympathy and to spare over a strange "poor gentleman," and not a grain of commiseration for a lonesome little chap of her own with a taste for mud-pies. I gained the Spotted Crocodile and passed Meakin's forge, where a man, who might have been Meakin, was shoeing a horse, and so to the house. Its front was pretentious but commonplace. One would not have looked twice at it. The rambling farm-house forming the back was faced by the most ordinary of villas, a villa of a conventionality of aspect which to me is always nauseating. Every blind was drawn to an equal

depth down every window. Such windows as were open were lifted to an equal height. The muslin curtains were immaculate and stretched on burnished rods. The steps and flags before the door were chalked as though they had something to conceal. The knocker was polished till its lustre stabbed the eyes. Altogether I was unfavourably impressed. The house was like a man whose teeth are too white. I mentally rubbed my hands. I love a house with so smiling a front. It rarely fails me. The door was opened by a sly-looking dapper housemaid. I had an impression of her levelling those blinds and polishing that knocker the while she laughed in her sleeve.

"Mr. Massey in?" I inquired.

"No sir, he's just gone out," she answered glibly; "if you was to walk up the road and turn to the right you'd be sure and catch him up," she added pointing her hand.

I know a lie when it is told me. I knew it then. I stepped over the spotless threshold into the immaculate hall.

"I will wait," I said.

Had I been less quick she would have shut the door on me. She stood watching me with eyes like knitting-needles.

"Master's not very well, and doesn't see anybody," she said, a little abashed.

"He will see me," I said confidently.

There is no situation in the world which cannot be carried by confidence. After a moment's hesitation she crossed the hall and flung a door open. I entered an old-fashioned parlour. I gave her my card. She seemed impressed.

"I will tell Mr. Smithson, my lord," she said, civilly.

"Now who the dickens is Smithson?" I wondered.

He was by my elbow while I did so. I had not heard him come, but there he was, a smooth-faced restless-eyed fellow with a chronic smile, and a superfluity of teeth phenomenally white.

"Mr. Massey is not well this morning, my lord," he said, obsequiously. "Can I take any message from your lordship?"

"He is not out then?"

Smithson shrugged his shoulders and displayed his teeth as if to acquit himself of all responsibility in that particular lie.

"He will be sorry to miss you," he said.

"I will call again."

He made another deprecating gesture as if to imply that should I do so my trouble would possibly be unrewarded.

"Your master is a dentist?" I remarked, in the hall.

"Pardon me, my lord, I am not at liberty to talk of my master's affairs," he said, suavely.

Just then a voice shouted hoarsely:

"Smithson, for God's sake let me out. I can't stand it any longer, I shall go mad."

The cry was repeated with groans and panting breath. Smithson's eyes met mine.

"My master requires me," he said, obviously speeding my departure.

"He seems in pain or some extremity. Go to him. I will open the door myself."

But he would not leave me.

"Oh! I am suffocating—suffocating!" the strangled voice expostulated.

Then the door was shut and locked. I caught the next train back to town. I had walked rapidly to the station. Not more than half-an-hour elapsed between my leaving the house by the front door and passing its rear in the train. I looked into the large room. The dentist's chair was occupied, and by the same grey-haired young man. His face was contorted, his eyeballs strained, his hands clutched the chair-arms with the same lividity of spasm.

The solution of the problem suggested itself. Massey was a lunatic, Smithson his keeper. The chair was a contrivance for restraining him in violent moods. The cries I had heard were thus explicable enough. My interest was now engaged. I set inquiries afoot but could learn little of him. Only people shook ominous heads at the mention of Smithson. I sent him a line. I should be in the neighbourhood shortly, and hoped for the pleasure of making his acquaintance. He replied that he would be delighted to see me.

Smithson eyed me with no favour.

"Are your master's violent fits liable to come on at any moment?" I inquired, as he preceded me across the hall. He turned and stared.

"I think it must be some mistake," he answered, "my master is not a lunatic." He still stared at me.

"He said he had not your lordship's acquaintance. You must be mistaking him for somebody else."

"That I will settle with himself," I

said. He still hesitated as if doubtful about admitting me. I pushed on.

"Lord Syfret," he announced to the old-fashioned parlour. The grey-haired young man came forward, stretching out both hands.

"You do me an honour," he said, nervously. Smithson left us. We plunged into conversation. He was a friendly fellow, and seemed flattered by my visit. I apologised for the intrusion. I was a person burdened with leisure and a bit of a busybody. I had remarked his house from the railway. Its quaint appearance had interested me. Had it any story? Might I go into the garden? Might I see his studio?

"My studio?" he questioned, fixing his prominent roving eyes on mine.

"I take the large room with the top-light to be a studio?" He seemed sobered.

"I do not paint," he said. He was a stockbroker, and had spent the greater part of his life in America. He had no friends in England.

"You shall see the room if you wish it," he said, a shade reluctant.

I wished it. As I had gathered from passing glimpses, it was a great bare room with nothing in it but the chair. I observed it surreptitiously. I would not hurt his feelings by being seen to remark it.

It was the most complicated piece of mechanism I had ever chanced upon. It bristled with clamps and devices.

We stood staring about the room. Somehow our eyes turned always on the chair. I could scarcely keep it off my lips.

"You have a pretty view," I said, still staring at it.

At length he broke out, nervously:

"You are looking at the chair?"

I scanned him closely. The mention of it was calculated to excite him. But he was quiet enough. Only his expression sobered, his lips twitched.

"It looks like a dentist's chair," I said, tritely.

"It is a dentist's chair." He added under his breath: "Don't ask me about it."

"Certainly not, if you do not wish it. Let us go into the garden." But he still stood there.

"You never before saw a chair like it," he asserted, jealously.

A new idea struck me.





"BEHIND ME ALL WAS SILENCE"

"It is an invention of your own?"

He turned on me peevishly. "You said you would not ask!"

"Pardon; let us go into the garden."

But he did not move. Suddenly he broke out. "I invent it! No, thank Heaven, it wasn't so bad as that."

He was growing agitated.

"Let us go into the garden," I said a third time.

He stood irresolute. He passed a thin hand over his brow.

"No, it was bad enough," he muttered. "Heaven knows it was bad enough, but it wasn't as bad as that." He looked furtively about the room. "I have never told anybody," he began.

I waited.

After a pause. "That chair nearly cost me my life." From under his faded hair a sweat-drop rolled and, gathering moisture as it travelled, trickled down over his forehead and fell on his hand. He took out his handkerchief and mopped his face. "It cost me my health and peace of mind," he muttered.

Suddenly he looked me in the face with a wild appeal.

"Do you think a man might go mad brooding over things?"

"I should think a man who recognised the possibility would not be such a fool as to brood over things," I said firmly.

"O, it's so easy to talk," he muttered, staring at the chair. He took a key from his pocket and slipping it into a triangular opening, turned it.

With a whirring click a lever slid down slowly from its place, the seat tilted, the flanges revolved. Then the chair flung wide its arms with the suggestion of a steel embrace. I thought of a certain metal "maiden" of Inquisition fame. He motioned me toward it.

"Will you try it?"

I declined with thanks—to his surprise. He stepped on to the platform with alacrity and seated himself.

"Lock it," he said, handing me the key.

I slipped it into the aperture and turned it.

Immediately the former process was reversed. The seat levelled, a series of plates jointed like armour closed down over his extended arms, a collar of iron gripped his throat, a steel thorax shut its two halves across his chest. He smiled me a pale smile from out of a vizor of iron.

"Isn't it marvellous?" he questioned.

"Devilish," I replied.

"I cannot move hand nor foot. You might cut my throat and I couldn't lift a finger."

Suddenly his expression changed. His eyeballs started. His skin took on a greenish pallor. Though he could not stir, his hands purpled under the tension of his muscles. He was the man I had seen from the train.

"For Heaven's sake let me out!" he gasped. "For Heaven's sake!"

I turned the lock. The chair flung wide its iron chest and arms. With a bound he leapt out vaulting to the other end of the room. If ever joy painted itself on a poor wretch's face, it painted itself on his. He shook me by the hand.

"Thank God!" he gasped, "It took me too soon. I must be losing my nerve."

"To tell the truth," I said bluntly, "you are a fool to play with your nerve in such a fashion."

In the garden he explained.

"The chair belonged to a friend of mine. Indeed, it was his invention. He spent years perfecting it. He was an American dentist, not very well off—an ingenious chap. He invented it so that he should not need an assistant in operating. The patient was absolutely controlled, and the operator unhindered. It was in America it all happened. He found it a great assistance to him, and was doing well. Indeed, he was doing too well. He was doing the work of three men.

Having been awake all night with toothache I took my way to him one morning.

"He had just moved into a new house. He was on the point of marrying a girl he had been fond of for years and was looking forward to happiness.

"As I went up the steps that morning I was surprised to meet him coming down. He had a travelling-bag in his hand.

"'Hallo!' he said.

"'Hallo!' I answered.

"'I'm just off to Newport for a week. The heat has been so terrific I'm dead beat. Doctor says another few days without a rest might do for me.'

"A man with a toothache is no Christian. 'For goodness sake,' I begged him, 'turn back and relieve me of this aching fiend.'

"He was a good-hearted chap. 'Why,

certainly,' he agreed, 'I can do it and yet catch my train. I'm well on time.'

"He unlocked the door, and we went in.

"'It's homicidal weather,' he said, 'and as I was going, I've given the servants a week off. There's not a soul in the place.'

"'Chair answering?' I asked, as I took my seat in it.

"He flushed proudly. 'I've taken out a patent. I showed it at the Dental Society's meeting last night. Congratulate me on a fortune.'

"He turned the key. For the first time I was locked in. It isn't altogether a pleasant sensation." "What do you want, Smithson? No, I did not call, but you can bring some wine."

He waited for the wine with curious, absent eyes. Then he went on with his story.

"Well, I was locked in. I lay back as if I had been in a vice, my mouth was gagged open. I could not move a muscle. Would you not like to test it?"

I shook my head.

"You will never altogether realise what I felt.

"I heard him cross the room behind me. I heard him coming back. You know the sensation? I was aware he was trying to hide a demon of a forceps in the palm of his hand. I braced myself for the wrench. I wondered vindictively why teeth had not been otherwise planned.

"Just as I thought he was on me I heard a stumble, a thud, a groan. I thought he had tripped.

"'Hurt yourself, old boy?' I asked.

"There was no answer. Only a deep, catchy breathing. 'He must have hurt himself a good deal,' I thought.

"The breathing grew quieter. I repeated the question. Instinctively I tried to turn—an impossibility, of course.

"'I hope you are not badly hurt,' I said, 'I can't go to you.'

"Still there was no answer. He must have seriously hurt himself. I mentally confounded the chair which held my head immovable. Then I spoke to him again. With no result. There was nothing to believe but that he had fainted. The breathing was now so quiet as to be almost inaudible. The necessity of freeing myself, so that I might go to his assistance, wrestled so

urgently with my inability to do so that I was on the verge of strangulation. With an effort I controlled myself. There was nothing to be done. Of the two, though he were insensible, I was by far the more powerless, for I was dependent on his aid before I could lift a finger. There was nothing for me to do but to wait. I waited. With how little patience you may guess. A clock in the room struck ten. It had 'tinged' the half hour after nine as I entered. I fairly groaned with vexation. Poor Newby would lose his train. Why the deuce had I not let him take himself off? My tooth could have waited, or have found another extractor. Into what a business my impatience had plunged us! I grew serious as to how far he might have injured himself. Possibly even when he should recover consciousness he might not be in a condition to release me. He might in falling have broken, or at least have dislocated, a bone. A hundred harassing probabilities occurred to me. I fumed and fretted, straining my eyeballs vainly to this and that side trying to catch a glimpse of him. I could still hear him faintly breathing. The stretched muscles of my gagged jaws began to throb and ache. I tried to call, but the throat has little power when the mouth is stretched, and the gag choked my voice. Moreover, I remembered that the house was empty. He had sent his servants away for a week. There was nothing for it but to wait. I waited. The clock on the table struck eleven. Half-a-dozen clocks outside reiterated the fact. It was eleven o'clock—eleven o'clock on a summer's morning. The world on the other side of the window was astir and busy. I could hear men's steps beat the pavement. They seemed to be leaving us behind. The rattle of cabs and clack of horse's hoofs mocked the dull stillness of the room. I stretched my ears for sounds of my poor friend's returning consciousness. I even dreaded that return lest it should prove him incapacitated. In that case what in the wide world were we to do? I put the thought away. Heaven knew I needed my wits to keep me from bruising myself against my iron bonds. I found myself cursing the evil genius of Newby's ingenuity with more intensity than reason. The clocks struck twelve. By this time the breath-sounds were



scarcely perceptible. Heavens! Was he dying? Was he dying for the need of help? Dying with a strong, whole man, and that man his good friend, within a yard of him? For a whole half-hour I shouted at the top of my voice; ~~shouted, indeed, till my~~ voice was a mere rough thread in my rasped throat. The sounds of life outside went on with a brisk indifference that seemed brutality. Was there no power, no telepathy of human sympathy, that should communicate to some of those outside that within the room whose window stared at them, a man lay, it might be dying, while another, gagged and bound, strove with unspeakable torment to go to his aid. The hours wore on. The horrible dread of listening for them, and learning from their iron tongue that another sixty minutes had closed down like an inexorable door between the man I had been in the morning—the free man, with no worse trouble than an aching tooth—and the bound, helpless wretch I then was, became intolerable. Sound, thought, feeling, merged in confusion. My brain throbbed in my ears, my blood beat in my veins; I could hear it like waves on shingle. Out of the confusion I distinguished nothing. The steps outside, the faint breathing, the striking clocks—all were lost in a curious hustling dread. I must have fainted. I awoke to a sense of surprise. But the torture of my constrained position left me but shortly in doubt. My lips and cheeks seemed cracking under the stretch of the gag. Like some swollen horror my dry tongue filled my mouth. Behind me all was—silence."

He stopped and looked me wildly in the face.

"Do you think I shall forget it if I live to be eighty?—the horror of that moment when I listened for his breathing, for his movement, and heard—nothing!"

He sat panting like one spent with running. I poured out and passed him a glass of wine.

"The sun was levelling. It shot in presently beneath the blind and stabbed my starting eyes. Its hot glare turned me sick. It seemed to be searching the room with a lurid inquisitiveness. Presently I thought it halted, resting stationary, with a dull astonishment, on something I could not see; something

behind me that I could not see, but felt with a horrible intensity. Again I shouted as well as my stiff jaws and swollen tongue would let me. I sent cry after cry into space. My voice was strange and hoarse. It put me in a panic to hear another man's voice shouting out of my throat. But nobody heard. There was nobody to hear. Each man tramped over the pavement, bent on his own pursuits. Just while the sun illumined us, had anybody turned his head, he might have seen me through the wire blind—a man in torture.

"But nobody turned his head. Night came, and with it a measure of coolness. The dusk was grateful to my nerves and eyes; and I had a hope that when the passers-by had taken their clattering footsteps home, I might, by Heaven's kindness, make myself heard. But by the time the silence came I had no voice to be heard. It was as much as I could do to draw my breath between my swollen lips. The night silence brought out that other silence into which I listened for his breathing. If I could only have caught a glimpse of him! If I could only have seen the reality rather than the horrible phantasies my mind began to conjure! I pictured him bruised and contorted, I pictured him weltering in blood; I pictured him lying, kneeling, sitting. I pictured him conscious and cunning, standing above me with a whetted knife. It came to me that he was not really dead, but had gone suddenly mad. I could feel him crouching close behind me waiting for the moment. I could hear him steal about the room. I strained my eyes to see his head come suddenly over my shoulder, his eyes glare into mine. I could feel his hot breath on my cheek. It was a trap. It was the devilry of one with homicidal mania. This was the motive of his horrible chair. This was the object of his years of planning. How many men before me had been his victims? The room seemed peopled with them.

They stared from every corner. They laughed with ghastly laughter at another dupe. I wondered if he would kill me outright, or leave me to die in the chair. I called to him to cut my throat and end it. I thought he chuckled. Again I was sure he was dead. And I was afraid of him—afraid of the grisly thing that lay so still behind me. I had rather



"ARE YOU GOING TO SIGN, YOU FOOL?"

he lived and stood by me with whetted knife. He was more fearsome dead and girt with the horrors of violent death than he was fearsome as an assassin, breathing, intelligible, and murderous.

"He seemed to me to lie there lifting his clammy hands with the continuous impotent movement of corpse hands stirred by a tide. I could hear them beat the carpet, rising and falling with rhythmic thud. Then I went back to the beginning. He was not dead, but something had fallen on his face—something that his faintness prevented him from removing, yet left him conscious enough to know that he was suffocating. I pictured the long, full breath he would draw if I but turned and freed him. I drew that breath for him, instinctively. I suffocated. I struggled in my bonds to turn and free him. I rasped my wrists and limbs till they were raw, trying to turn and free him. Then it was nose-bleeding—he had suffered sometimes from nose-bleeding. He was dying of that, dying for need of the simplest aid. The room swam red. It streamed before me in crimson jets. Could any man's body hold so much blood? It rose and rose and lapped my face. Again I heard him lift his body dully in the dark. He came dragging himself round to look me in the face. His chill hands swept my forehead, importuning me. My hair lifted on my scalp. Why had I come between him and life? Why had I robbed him of happiness? His spirit moaned about the room. I prayed for his knife at my throat. Only let it end; let it end. A thousand times he crossed the room as I had heard him cross it, to return with feet that at first were light, then dragged, then halted and passed into that sickening thud. He seemed to try so hard to reach me, returning again and again and starting afresh for my chair. A thousand times I held my breath, hoping he had reached me, when he tripped and fell—fell with that sickening thud.

"His children came, the children that might have been his, and looked at me with phantom eyes. I could not turn my face from them. Anything that liked to come might come and stare at me; I could not turn my face."

I interrupted him. The man was possessed. The veil between him and madness was stretched to cracking point.

"How did it end?" I asked.

He started and stared.

"How did it end?" I insisted.

"Let me tell it," he said peevishly. After some moments of childish petulance during which he weakly whimpered. "It went on three whole days and nights," he said, moistening his lips. "In lucid moments I knew he was dead. The odour of death and dissolution in that hot terrible room became intolerable. I was without food or drink. I could not sleep. I could not call. I could only think and feel—such thoughts, such feelings! I only knew of that which lay and decomposed behind my chair. I am only thirty. But do you wonder my hair is grey? I had intervals of unconsciousness thank Heaven, prostration and delirium. Hunger and faintness do that for a man.

"In the small hours of the fourth morning, while it was still dark, a noise at the window aroused me. I wonder I was still alive; but men take a good deal of killing. At first I thought it fancy. I had had so many fancies. But I heard a sound as of bitten glass, then the hasp of the window flew back, the sash was raised. Between my swollen lids there came a glare of light. Black things flitted on the ceiling. I heard whispering. I thought they had come to kill me. The scalding water of my tears ran down my face as I thanked God they had come to kill me. It seemed hours they were stealing about the room, with hoarse whispers. I could only see their shadows on the ceiling. How many there were I could not say, but a hundred heads at least passed blackly over the ceiling.

"Then my tears ran cold. They were only shadows. It was only another phantasy. My imagination was at play again. I hurled wild imprecations at the shadow heads. 'You are not, you are not!' I cried to them out of my voiceless throat. 'You do not deceive me, I know you are not.' Then a horrible face—a face half black, half white, leaned over me. A hoarse cry broke in my ears. Soon two horrible piebald faces leaned over me. A second cry came, a third, and they stood panting there. One touched the thing beside me with his foot.

"'Both dead,' he muttered, as one balked of prey. I mustered all my strength and moaned. They made for



the door. My despair and desolation nerved me.

"For God's sake, cut my throat!" I groaned. I heard them turn back. Then I knew nothing more till I found myself in hospital. I had been rescued by burglars, and three weeks mad.

"When I was well I knew the truth. Newby had died that morning of an apoplectic seizure. Nothing could have saved him, the doctors said."

"Why did you not have the chair destroyed?"

He turned on me angrily.

"It is my only comfort. I recompense myself for past misery by multiplying the joys of release. I have a man, a faithful fellow—the only other person besides yourself who knows my story. I get him to lock me in, leave me, and then, when I have worked myself to the limits of terror, believing myself deserted, he lets me out. The joy of release is the only joy left to me. I need and allow myself no other indulgence."

I had been making up my mind.

"Are you a good sailor?"

He was. By superhuman eloquence I persuaded him to consent to a voyage in my yacht. I was starting next morning. I am no philanthropist, but a man's sanity is worth saving. An hour after I had left the house I went back to it. There was a look on Smithson's face when told to pack that had remained with me. I went by the side-door round into the garden. As the annex came into view Smithson appeared at the window. He was smiling unpleasantly. The room was lighted. Massey was in the chair. (Was the fool worth saving?) Smithson turned presently into the room. I made my way to the window, and stood in the shade of a shrub.

"I'll have the gag," I heard my king of idiots say. "I want to get up a real good sensation. It's the last I'll have for a time."

I heard the click of metal.

"Now go," Massey mumbled, "and keep me a long time to-night."

But Smithson went not. On the

contrary, he turned and flicked his victim in the face.

"Not before we've arranged a bit of business," he said, jauntily. "Now then, young man I've put up with you a good many months, and you're a-going to send me adrift are you?"

Inarticulate dissent from Massey.

"O! yes you are. Syfret's got hold of you. You've passed out of my hands. There'll be no more chair and



"FALLING FOUL OF THE CHAIR"

gags for you I can see plainly. But I am going to be paid for all my trouble. Fifty pound a year hasn't paid me, I can tell you. I shall loose your right hand for you to sign this. If you don't—well, you've been locked in here before, and you know how you like it. There'll be no one in the house. Bess and me was married this morning, and we're off to America by the night boat. If you was to refuse to sign, I should lock all the doors and windows and put

up the shutters. I've told everybodyt we're all going a voyage. And you need not look for burglars this time. There's nothing in the house to take, Bess and me has seen to that. Now then, are you going to sign, you fool?"

Massey managed to query through the gag; "How much?"

"Only five thou'. You could spare ten easy. But I'll do with five."

Massey groaned. But, of course, he relented. What else could he have done?

I went in behind Smithson while he was busy with the lock. I set my knee against his back and threw him. He fell heavily, striking his head. He was safe for some minutes. In those minutes I released Massey. Together we lifted the rascal into the chair and turned the key. It was a capital contrivance for extracting truth. We discovered the whereabouts of the plate and other

hings Mr. and Mrs. Smithson had appropriated. With some of them she was waiting in the kitchen. Then I let him out and bundled him into the road. When I went back, I discovered Massey with a pitchfork falling manfully foul of the chair. He raised his weapon high. He brought it down with violent invective. He banged and battered till the clamps and flanges were a homogeneous mass; he ripped its velvet cushionings, and broke its arms and legs. With a fell and final swoop he hurled himself upon it and smote the gag with such a blow that it bounded across the room, and breaking a pane of glass, whirled into the garden.

Anybody seeing him would have taken him for nothing less than a homicidal maniac. Yet this murderous attack of his was about the first symptom of sanity I had remarked in him.



# *Some Experiences of Lord Syfret.*

By ARABELLA KENEALY.

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## THE VILLA OF SIMPKINS.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. SAVAGE.



HERE is an atmosphere about houses. They who live and joy and grieve in them invest them with a kind of aura. So some houses come to wear a face of gloom, of gaiety, of tragedy or terror. This circumstance, to me so manifest, escapes the notice of most persons.

One can see that tiles are broken on the roof; another that the window curtains are in need of washing; another that the masonry demands re-pointing or the woodwork re-painting; while a fourth condemns the sanitary arrangements. But the more intrinsic fact, the fact of desolation or disaster, that to my mind is most obvious, they miss; and even when perceived they refer to some detail of dilapidation or poverty. That my instinct is infallible I do not claim. On the contrary, it has more than once deceived me; but in cases where it has been rooted and tenacious, even though proofs have not substantiated it, I am satisfied my conviction of mystery or calamity has had its origin in fact; that the sense I have of violence and murder in the midst of a smiling family is an echo, a shadow, a stain on the fabric of life left by some former catastrophe. Sometimes I have been able to justify it by raking up the ashes of the past. Sometimes—and this is singular—the tragedy has happened long after I have sensed it. Of this what follows is an example.

Sauntering one day down a road in a suburban town, whither I had gone in search of adventure, I came upon a house a-building. It was a villa residence much after the style of other villa residences in the neighbourhood, a sixteen or eighteen-roomed house divided from

its fellows by an acre of geometrically laid-out garden wherein it stood with a pretentious and pharisaical air of being some Englishman's castle. The structure was completed, and men were painting the wood-work, gravelling the walks and putting in the other finishing touches which would for a year or two make its ostentatious freshness a reproach to its less lately smartened neighbours. There was nothing to stir one's interest. It was only another of the housings of opulent vulgarity with which the place abounded—housings that smacked of the shop and suggested sleek over-fed occupants, in whom wine and good living had produced a kind of mental adiposity to act as buffer between their natures and the higher issues of life, as the flesh of physical plethora obliterated the lines divine of their persons. I passed on unconcerned. At the further entrance to the drive a man was standing, overlooking the hinging of a gate. I took him to be owner or builder.

The man's face struck me. I stopped short. He glanced up, scowling as though he would have despatched me about my business. Now I was interested. I had seldom seen a face of so much malignity. It struck me that I would not care to occupy a house planned by a fellow so evil. A shock of rough red hair and beard overgrew his face. His nose, slightly awry, was long and flattened at the nostrils with both cruelty and sensuality. His lips were thick and protrusive. The hand and wrist extended, directing the men, were shaggy with a coarse red thatch. One eye had a sinister droop. No: I should not care to tenant a house of his building.

"Do you want anything?" he demanded roughly after a minute. He was well-dressed and apparently a person of some standing.



I returned his savage glance with a cool stare

"I want nothing," I said curtly.

He had more than a mind to inquire why then (with qualifications) I filled up the path. But he thought better of it. There is no law to prohibit a man from staring, and my manner proclaimed my determination to stare just so long as it pleased me.

"Hang you, you'll scrape the paint!" he shouted, as one of the workmen stumbled and jammed against the post the gate he was lifting.

The man grumbled something to the effect that the job was too much for two.

"Then go and be hanged to you," the builder rasped.

"Get your wage in the office and march!"

The man mumbled sullenly again, "I'm sick o' being swore at from mornin' to night."

"Easy mate," his comrade counselled. "Now then, stretch yer limbs and in she goes."

With an effort they hoisted the gate and lowered it, dropping the bolts into the sockets with a rush.

"Hang you!" the builder shouted again; "it wasn't your fault you didn't snap the hinges."

The labourers, panting, mopped their faces.

"You have a limited glossary, my friend," I interposed, addressing the red-haired bully. "Take the advice of an older man, and curb your tongue. That 'hang' of yours is not calculated to bring the best work out of men."

He swung his evil eye upon me like a lamp. Only the self-control of habit prevented him from striking me. All at once his manner changed. He scanned me closely; then he raised his hat.

"Pardon, my lord," he said, obsequiously. "I did not recognise you. Your lordship does not know me, perhaps. I have the honour to be your new agent at Rossmore."

"The deuce you have!" I answered. "From your credentials I should have supposed you a different man."

I resolved on the spot that never again, no matter how excellent his testimonials, would I engage a man without an interview.

"Your lordship misjudges me," he submitted plausibly. "I confess to being in bad humour. If you had much to do

with this class you would find there is but one way of dealing with it."

"It will not do at Rossmore," I said sharply. "My people are not used to the treatment of dogs."

"In dealing with your lordship's concerns I shall follow your lordship's wishes," he responded, adding, with a spasm of independence: "Here I am attending to my own affairs."

I liked him the better for his independence. I laughed and nodded him good-morning.

"Your temper is not pretty," I said, as I walked off. "Indeed, I was thinking I should not care to occupy a house built by a person so profane as yourself."

He made two steps after me. His face paled in its circle of red hair.

"Do you mean anything?" he submitted, hoarsely. There was an uneasy glitter in his eyes.

"Pooh!" I said. "I shall not cancel our agreement for a few 'hangs.'"

His eyes still probed my face. My words had plainly relieved him. Yet I had a curious sense of something underlying all that appeared.

"When your six months are up, my friend," I soliloquised. "I shall exchange you for a steward of more prepossessing looks."

\* \* \*

A month later I strolled down the same road. I stopped short at the gates of Simpkins' house—the gates which had had so sulphurous a baptism. On one was painted the name Edenhome. It struck my sense of humour. Was it of Simpkins's giving? Lurked there beneath that red thatch of his a corner for sentiment? I decided otherwise. Simpkins and sentiment were not compatible. The name was merely a lure for letting purposes.

I ran my eye over the house's face. Was it the place? Surely not. This was no house of only some months standing. I walked up the road and came back to it. This was the place, assuredly. I stood staring at it. What in the name of amazement had come to it? Where was the freshness that was to put its neighbours to the blush? The place had an air of ruin, of a house unrepaired for half a century. It were as though a blight had fallen on it. The paint of the gates had dulled into a dirty drab, the hinge-end was discoloured by

a rust-stain, which, like a blood-stain, had trickled from the iron sockets. Someone had made it his business to scratch out the initial letter, so that the name stood on one gate "Denhome." The abridgement seemed to scowl. I opened the gate and went in. The same blight that had fallen on the house had fallen on the garden. The greater number of the shrubs had shrivelled and

tion. There was nothing to explain the impression I had had of ruin.

I started; for of a sudden at an upper window, from among a daintiness of pink blind, a sinister face showed out. It was gone as soon as seen. But I knew the evil eye; I knew the Iscariot hair and beard; I knew the malign glance. Irritation succeeded. What business had Simpkins here? His duty



"DO YOU WANT ANYTHING?"

died. The walks were set with brown ghosts. The grass of the lawn had fallen in patches, giving an uncanny piebald look. As I approached I perceived that blinds had been put to the windows—fresh gay-looking blinds of a pink pattern. They only served to accentuate the gloom. Apparently the house was about to be occupied. I wondered how anybody could have been induced to take it. Coming closer, I found I had been betrayed into a singular error, for the paint was fresh and unpeeled, the structure in excellent condi-

tion. I strode up the steps. The door stood ajar—I entered. Inside the house was as sombre as outside. Gloom and ill-omen possessed it like black-browed tenants. I mounted the stairs, my footsteps echoing hollowly and fleeing before me noisy and afraid, like sound running amuck in the empty upper spaces. Suddenly they seemed to turn, and came hustling back upon me—leaping, stumbling down the stairs as if in panic. A rumbling echo roared like distant thunder. For a moment I thought the

house was about my ears—its premature decay had culminated in the falling of the roof. Then there was silence, the echoes slipping into quietude.

I went straight on, making for the room in which I had seen him. My temper was up. I determined to give Mr. Simpkins a piece of my mind. At the top of the stairs I halted. Not a sound stirred. The landing was broad and well-lighted. Into it four doors opened. The construction was different from that I had expected. There was a broad blank passage wall where I had supposed the door of the front room—the principal bed-room—would be. It was a construction as singular as it was unsightly. It had been so obvious to place the door of that centre room in the centre of this wall.

Suddenly I felt faint. The passage was pervaded by a curious heavy odour, arising, I imagined, from the paint. My head throbbed.

I made for one of the rooms facing me. The air here was fresh. I threw up a window and leaned out. When I was quite myself I looked about the room. I was astonished to find it small. Holding my handkerchief to my nostrils I went down the passage and opened the other door, the only other door in the front wall. Another little room! And no Simpkins! Where could the fellow be? And where was the door of that room in which I had seen him?—a room which must take up at least half the house front. I went all over the house. Not a sign of him; yet he could not have escaped without me seeing him. And why should he? My head throbbed heavily from the curious fumes. It did not smell like paint. Nor was its effect like paint. Probably an escape of gas.

I threw up another window. Doing so I looked out. I was in the second small front room. To the left of me was the big bay-window at which I had seen Simpkins. I went to the end of the corridor. From the window of the other room the bay showed to my right. I felt maddened. Where was the entrance to that room—where, doubtless, Simpkins still remained? Pacing the passage I heard a sound as though something dropped. I knocked angrily upon the wall.

"Simpkins," I shouted, "what is the meaning of this fool's play? Where and why are you hiding?"

The words came back to me like gibes out of the hollows of the house. I shouted again only to be answered in the same strain. I went downstairs, and out into the garden. I ran my eye over the house front. It was as though I were being mocked. For not only were the windows I had opened still thrown up, but the three sashes of the bay, which before had been closed, were now raised. Out there in the daylight I could not help suspecting myself of some stupidity. There must be a door leading from one of the smaller side-rooms to that centre room—a door I had missed. Yet I had carefully looked for such a door. Bah! my senses must have been fogged by that vapour. My head even now throbbed with it. A room without entrance was an absurdity!

I went back to the house. The door was shut fast. I rattled it. I threw my weight against it. It was fast locked. Yet I had left it ajar. Was I being fooled, or was I fooling myself? Had I indeed seen Simpkins? Was anything as it had seemed to me that morning? I strode to the nearest telegraph office and wired him at Rossmore. In an hour a reply came: "Am here, at your lordship's service.—SIMPKINS." I took a course of Turkish baths and drank no wine for a week. If there be one thing I despise it is a man who cannot keep his head clear.

\* \* \*

The villa of Simpkins faded from my mind, as did likewise, to some extent, my first impression of its builder. To say I ever liked him would mis-state the truth. But I could not help recognizing his exceptional business gifts and the zeal wherewith he prosecuted my affairs. I began to re-consider my intention of parting with him.

One morning I received the following letter from a girl dismissed a year before from my employ for bungling some business whereon she had been set:—

"HONoured LORD,—Pardon my addressing you, for I know you think low of me since the Smithson case; but any girl would have been frightened when Smithson took the carving-knife to her. But even Smithson's, honoured lord, was not as bad as this place. Yet mistress and master is bride and bridegroom, and a nicer couple couldn't be. 'What is it?'



you'd ask. It's the house, honoured lord. Yet it's a nice house, and the kitchen and pantries everything you could want for. But there's something about it. What that is time, if I ever have the nerve to stop long enough, will show. It's called 'Denhome' on the gate"—here I pricked up my ears—"but young mistress calls it 'Edenhome,' which we lay to soft-heartedness.

Honoured lord, the Lovells are not gentry; which, when I found out, I never thought I could stop. But Mrs. Lovell's an angel, and there's no stint, them having come into a fortune. I don't rightly know the facts, but as they taught us at the Institute not to leave out anything, I mention that the Lovells got their money curious. Someone else had it, an uncle of theirs—Mr. Sinkin his name is——"

"My dear young woman," I here interjected, "you are disregarding one of my most stringent rules—that of getting names correctly."

"Well, he'd had the money—two thousand a year it is—for nearly ten years, when it was proved it wasn't his, but Lovell's. He'd kept back a will or something, they say; but it couldn't be proved. So he had to turn out. He must be a kind man, because he's built them this house, and won't take any rent for it. He says it eases his conscience. And, of course, he can't help there being something horrible about the house. It's a nice view, and polished floors, but the strangest noises and feel about it. Mr. Sinkin comes sometimes. He isn't a nice-looking gentleman, being cross-eyed and carrotty, but he's wonder-

ful kind and keeps telling master to look after his health, being delicate; and as Sinkin would get the money if master was to die, I call it kind. He's that careful of them nobody would expect—considering. The first time he came he was quite taken up because they didn't sleep in the best bed-room. 'It's a south aspic,' he said, quite angry, 'and a big atmosphy room. It was built special



"A PRETTY FRAGILE LITTLE CREATURE"

for you.' He quite stamped up and down the carpet, and mistress put her pretty white hand on his shoulder—though she's afraid of him—and she says, 'Uncle, we keep it for visitors. We keep it for you when you come. You've been so good to us.' He stared and looked quite queer. He was terribly vexed they didn't use the room he made for them.

"'O, you keep it for me, do you,' he says. Then he burst out laughing. He

laughs rather hoarse, and young mistress, she got nearer to master and put her hand to her throat. I was setting the table for dinner and I wasn't hurrying. Mr. Sinkin isn't good-looking, but he's nice spoken, and though I only hung his great coat up for him he gave me five shillings and says, 'you look after my nephew and niece. I'm fond of 'em.'

"It came up again at dinner. I had just handed him his pudding—mistress made it with her own hands—when he says again, shaking his fist playful at her, 'and don't let me hear any more of your not sleeping in the front bed-room—the room I built special, so sunny and healthy for poor Ned. Ned's lungs want a south aspic.' Master laughs and says, 'Why, uncle, all the front rooms are south.' Sinkin looked vexed. And I thought myself it was all they could do to please him and not argue. He says, frowning, 'It's the atmospheriness you want, Ned,' and he turned to mistress and says something about cuba feet, and ends, 'so I look to you to see Ned sleeps there. His mother died consumptive.' Mistress turned pale and caught the master's hand. 'O, Ned dear,' she says. 'I've no cough,' he answers, 'it's only uncle's over-kindness.'

"Ought he to go abroad?' she says to Sinkin, almost sobbing.

"He's best where he is,' he says short. 'The drains abroad are shocking.'

"Uncle,' she says, shivering, there's noises in the room—the strangest noises. Could it be rats?'

"He looked hard at her and says slowly: 'Rats in a new house—and a well-built house like this. Nonsense.' After a minute: 'There aren't noises every night?' he asks.

"No,' she says, 'only sometimes—horrid rumbling noises, and I think the gas escapes. That's why I thought it must be rats. They say rats eat the pipes.'

"I don't wonder he looked cross. It wasn't like mistress to argue so. Master broke out laughing. 'Uncle will think we're very ungrateful, Milly,' he says. 'And you can't be so silly as to think rats eat gas pipes.'

"Will you sleep there to-night, uncle,' she says. 'I should feel comfortable if somebody had slept there.'

"He finished picking out a walnut. Then, 'There's nothing I'd like better,'

he says. But after all he fell asleep in the library. I found him there when I went to do it next morning. His boots and coat was off, and he was on the couch covered with rugs almost as if he'd meant to sleep there. He gave me half-a-crown. 'You needn't say anything,' he says, 'but I was that tired I dropt asleep.' And he took his coat and boots and slipped up to the spare room. Honoured lord, it wasn't a week after when a young gent stopping here went to bed in the spare room—mistress couldn't bring herself to sleep there—as cheerful as might be, and in the morning he was dead—poisoned, the doctor said, with prussic acid. There he was, stretched out with his eyes staring horrible and his face blue, and the room like an essence-of-almonds bottle. Mr. Sinkin came down in an awful state. He got the papers to leave out the name of the house and paid us servants to keep it quiet.

"And, for Heaven's sake, don't leave the house,' he says to master, 'or I shall never let it again!'

"Master promised faithful. He had to settle it after with mistress. She begged him to take her away. She'd heard the noises that very night. 'I've promised uncle,' he says. So you see, honoured lord, I'm right in calling it an awful house. You don't know what a feel there is about it."

I wrote her one question. She replied, "The middle front room door opens in the passage just opposite the stairs. There's a little room at each end of the passage."

"Simpkins," I said, "I shall be in Suburbia this week. Can I leave a message for you at Edenhome?"

He finished the few lines of a letter he was writing. Then he looked up. What eyes he had!

"Pardon," he said, "I am anxious to catch this post. Now I am at your lordship's service."

"Well, you heard what I said."

He scanned me narrowly.

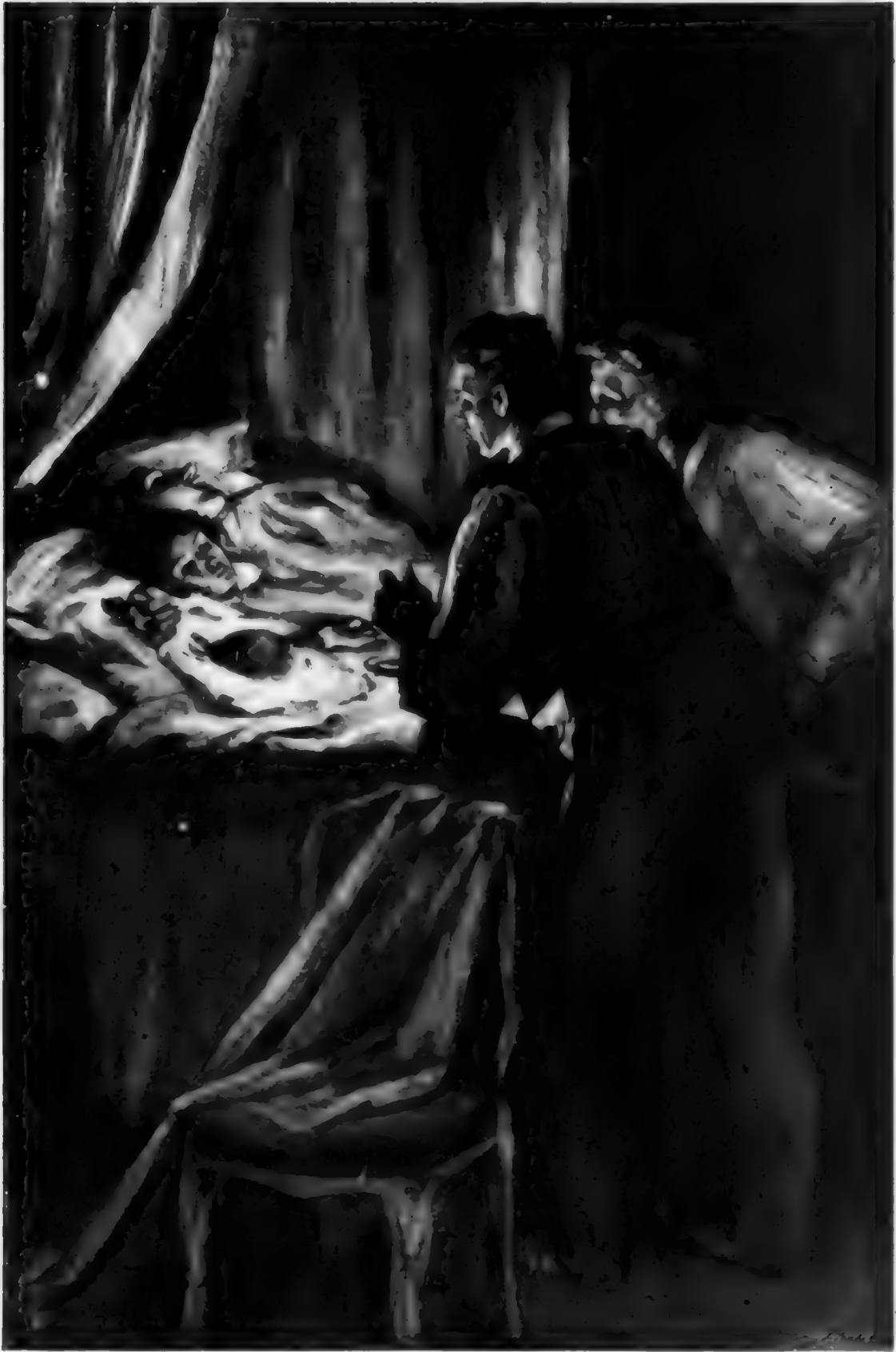
"My lord," he returned, "I fancied I could not have heard aright."

"Imagine you did."

"I have let Edenhome," he said, evasively.

"To a nephew, I know. Can I leave a message for you?"

"Your lordship is pleased to jest. My nephew is not likely to be so favoured."



"THEY STARED STRAIGHT INTO ETERNITY"



"So so. I must introduce myself."

"There is not likely," he said, sneeringly, "to be anything in common between Ted Lovell, the draper's son—I do not pretend to be a person of family—and your lordship."

"I am interested in people," I returned, observing him. "I have heard of the suicide. I am interested in that haunted front room."

I saw the watch-chain on his waistcoat lift high. Then he spread his hands with a deprecatory gesture.

"I regret that somebody has been playing on your lordship's—I will not say credulity."

"You have no message, then?"

He followed me across the room with a curious cat-like tread. The air about him bristled with violence.

"You are pleased to be interested in my affairs," he said, with a suspicion of menace.

"I am interested in the construction of a certain room in a house I saw you building. You remember I went over it once," I added, quickly. But I was not quick enough. His eyebrows lifted.

"I was not aware it had been so honoured." His manner changed. "As you are so kind," he said, smoothly, "I will take the liberty of asking you to talk with Lovell. Since Rudderford's case, he has spoken morbidly of suicide. It is idiocy in a man so well placed."

"I will advise him to sleep in the large front room," I said.

He turned as if I had struck him, and went back to his work.

\*     \*     \*

Hopkins opened the door. Her lids dropped on a gleam of recognition. It was the first rule of my institution that wheresoever or whensoever I should appear I was not to be identified. A pretty, fragile little creature in a tea-gown tripped into the drawing-room.

"I am pleased to know you," I said, taking her hand. "I am Lord Syfret. You will perhaps have heard of me: Mr. Simpkins is my agent."

She blushed and fluttered, smiling up at me.

"Uncle was good to speak of us, and your lordship is kinder to come and see us," she said, prettily.

Lovell was a pale-faced, ill-grown Cockney, proud of his lately-acquired money, proud of all he had exchanged

it for, and genuinely proud of his little wife.

"She's a jewel I wouldn't change for the 'ighest lady in the land," he confided to me. His watery eyes were full of tears. The statement was not likely to be put to the test; but I believe he honestly meant it.

"If you can put me up for the night I shall be infinitely obliged," I said. They would be greatly honoured. I hinted to be allowed to occupy the front large room.

"Why, I'd just persuaded Milly we'd sleep there to-night," he blurted.

Milly broke in—

"I will have a fire put there for you, Lord Syfret," and tripped away.

We had finished dinner, and Milly had sung me her songs—sweet little ballads she sang in a sweet little unaffected way—when there came a knocking at the front door. After an interval Simpkins entered. His eyes were blood-shot, his air restless. As he came in he shot a look at Lovell. That look said plainly, "I got your wire." I received him coolly. I regarded his intrusion as an impertinence. With his entry a reserve fell upon us. Poor Mrs. Lovell lost all her confidence and smiling gaiety. She watched him with a fascinated terror. She stole nearer to me as if for protection. Presently she made her apologies. She was not well and might she be excused? She was faint and trembling. I gave her my arm to the door. She sent one long shuddering look back at him. Then she drew a little agitated hand across her brow.

"O, my lord," she moaned through her white lips, "I am so afraid of him."

I steadied her to a chair. Lovell came out. I went back to the drawing-room. Simpkins sat scowling there.

"Your lordship's and my visits were ill-timed," he said, with a coarse laugh. "This night, even, may make me a great uncle."

After a few moments, professing anxiety about his niece, he left. Out in the hall an altercation sounded. I could hear his rough voice raised. I could hear the sob and pleading of a woman's voice and Lovell's cockney drawl. Once she cried out: "O, Ned, I cannot, cannot sleep there."

I went out.

"Is Mrs. Lovell better?" I questioned. She came to me with pleading hands.

"O, Lord Syfret——" she began. Simpkins caught her by the arm.

"You are hysterical," he said, roughly. "You must not bother his lordship."

I took her hand. "Remember, my dear, that I am to have the haunted room."

"Do you say it is haunted?" she asked, with wild eyes.

"You frighten her," Simpkins interposed, adding ceremoniously, "I regret the room has not been prepared for you. It is Mr. and Mrs. Lovell's own room."

She turned on him helplessly. She caught her breath with a sob. Lovell put his arm about her and persuaded her upstairs. At the top of the staircase she turned and swept one last terrified look down at us. Then she was gone. That look has never left me. To my death I shall regret that I did not act upon it and save her. I turned on Simpkins, who also stood looking up. There was in his face a singular malignant exultation.

"Why the deuce did you interfere?"

He looked me insolently in the eyes.

"Your lordship does not act with his accustomed breeding when he forces himself on an employé's affairs, and even dictates the room his host shall put him in."

He followed me into the drawing-room. There was an aggressive triumph about him.

"I sleep in town," he said. "Good-night."

I bowed. At the door he turned back.

"My agreement with you ends next week," he intimated, airily.

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In the middle of the night I was roused by a curious sound. It seemed to be a muffled rumbling close at hand. I threw on some clothes and slipped into the passage. In the dim light I could see a thin line of shadow sliding down the wall—almost as if the wall had been moving. From somewhere sounded a hollow ticking, like that of an immense clock. Strange how the night develops sound! I had not seen nor previously heard a clock.

I was returning to my room, all noise but the sonorous tick having ceased, when I thought I heard a cry—a faint cry—in the same little voice that had

sung me her ballads. It was followed by two deep groans. Heavens! what had happened? I stood listening, with strained ears. But no other sound came, nothing but that ghostly ticking. I groped my way along the passage, feeling for a door. I missed it, but coming to the centre, where I had seen it some hours earlier, I laid my ear against the wall. I was struck by its curious chillness. The wall was of iron! I did not stop to wonder, for now I could plainly detect a deep drawn breathing. It kept time intermittently with the clock. I knocked on the wall. It might be merely Lovell snoring. But I did not like the sound of it.

Suddenly I became aware of the same heavy odour I had before detected. It was no escape of gas. I remembered Hopkins' words about the bitter almonds. This was a smell of bitter almonds. Then I laughed at myself. I should be seeing Rudderford's ghost next! Yet so strongly were my senses worked upon that I grew presently faint with the overpowering odour. And it was unmistakably a smell of bitter almonds. Again I groped for the door handle. I drew my hands along and up and down the wall, going over the whole expanse between the rooms at either end. I could find neither handle nor panel nor jamb. The whole extent was one smooth, iron-cold surface. The clock clacked tick! tick! tick! with sonorous beat. By this the stentorous breathing had ceased. On the other side was silence.

Groping once more and finding no door, I became alarmed. I ran back to my room—my head throbbing till I reeled—and lighted a candle. I dipped my handkerchief into water and bound it loosely across my mouth and nostrils. Then I carried my candle into the passage. It was as I had suspected. There was no door. As on that morning, so now the space between the rooms at either end of the corridor was one plain surface. Trapping and testing brought out the chill feel and hollow note of metal. An iron plate had been dropped over the door—barring egress and ingress. The horrible clock ticked on. For what purpose? I was now convinced of some catastrophe. I knocked and called. I pounded with my fists upon the iron plate. It sounded thunderously, reproducing in exaggeration the noise that had



"FLUNG HIMSELF UPON THE PANELS"



awakened me. But no other sound answered. I rushed upstairs and stood in the upper passage calling for help. I beat one or two doors. Soon a man appeared—the single man-servant of the establishment. He thrust his head out sleepily.

"Come," I insisted, "something has happened."

As we descended the same low, rumbling sound was audible. In the flickering light the wall was crossed again by a rapid line of shadow—a line that now ascended. Then all was silent. Even the clock stopped. By this the almond smell was overpowering. I made the man protect his mouth and nostrils. The first thing my light flashed on was the door of Lovell's room, the door of which a minute earlier there had been no trace. Gracious, what devilry was this? And what the calamity. I knocked loudly on the panels. An ominous stillness reigned. I knocked again. Then I turned the handle and went in.

They were dead. They lay quiet as in sleep, only a curious blueness of skin and glassiness of the widely-staring eyeballs showed the sleep final. Her hand was in his; her head lay on his shoulder. So they stared straight into eternity, a smile on their faces.

But this was not all. The pitifulness of it—the pitifulness! For at her side, curled up as if in slumber, lay a newborn babe—a tiny premature thing that nestled a darkly-curling head against her arm.

\* \* \* \*

Before it was day I had interviewed the magistrate and police. They poo-hooed my version of the case, rejecting it as melo-drama; such things were not out of romances. The case was manifestly one of concerted suicide. The sliding-wall excited smiles. In the middle of the night, they said, one can be pardoned some foggiess of sense. They did not consider there was so far a tittle of evidence on which to arrest Simpkins.

I sent for a London detective. I set an expert to explore the wall. It were impossible, he said, to explain a singular construction without some preliminary and considerable damage, which pending the inquest was not advisable. There were grooves in the door-jambs of the

small rooms off the passage—there was space to contain such a sliding-wall as I had indicated.

That night I secreted in the house my detective, two police-officers and a friend. I knew Simpkins would come, and he came, as I likewise expected, with materials for a conflagration. Hopkins admitted him. He would remain the night, he said. He professed an overwhelming grief. He had already supped. He would go straight to that room where the dead lay. Through a peep-hole punctured in the wall we watched him from one of the adjoining rooms. No sooner was the door shut than he dragged chairs, cushions, towel-rack, all else combustible toward the door. He even tore the curtains from the bed. Then he saturated the whole with oil he had with him. He had lighted a fuse and was making for the door when suddenly he stopped.

Tick! tick! began the clock. Tick! tick! It startled us with its suddenness and nearness. In a panic he flung his fuse. It fell short and lay smouldering on the floor. But he heeded nothing. He was beating frenziedly upon the door. However, we had seen into that. Tick! tick! went the clock. He thundered with his fists and feet and shouted desperately.

A rumbling began. He flung himself upon the panels. But they held out bravely. Tick! tick! went the clock; rumble, rumble, rolled the descending wall. He sprang to the windows; but we had seen to those. Suddenly I realised what was about to happen. The devilry planned by himself was on his track, hastened, it might be, by the explorations of my expert.

"Quick, quick!" I urged. "Unlock the door; we must not take the law into our hands."

But we were too late. Outside, in the corridor, the sliding wall came down—the door was sealed. The rumble ceased; but the clock ticked on, counting his moments. The almond smell rose strong.

"Where do the fumes come from?" I questioned.

The detective, with an impassive face, stepped aside from a peep-hole. I looked long enough to see that a soft-spraying like tiny rain was falling in the room. Already he lay on the floor with gasping breath and distended eyes. I

left the peep-hole to more interested watchers. Tick! tick! went the clock, counting his moments. Tick! tick! tick! "He's dead," they said. Tick! tick! went the clock. We passed into the corridor. The wall slid presently up with its curious rumble. Then the clock stopped. We opened the door and went in. He was dead, truly. And

death in his guise was not dignified. He had been caught in the trap of his own ingenuity—for the mechanism showed a devilish ingenuity. The clockwork regulating it—clockwork set by his own hand—had with a fine unerring justice timed away his life. I will wager clockwork has rarely done the world greater service.



THE FISHERMAN'S LANDING  
From a photograph by the Rev. A. H. Blake

# *Some Experiences of Lord Syfret.*

BY ARABELLA KENEALY.

## THE WOLF AND THE STORK.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. SAVAGE.



### CHAPTER I.

DETEST hotels. I have in them always a sense of being in a menagerie. Whether it be that persons in a crowd revert to primitive conditions, or that their collective atmosphere somehow betrays the lower origin, I cannot say. I only know that individuals who at home would be refined enough and decent members of society, suggest a zoo when massed together in hotel. As will doubtless have long since become apparent, I am no amiable person, nor do I think I can be suspected of loving, no matter what scientific interest it pleases me to take in my fellow-man. Therefore I avoid a crowd: therefore I am no frequenter of hotels. Chance took me, however, one summer to a holiday resort in Scotland, a place where men pursue the sport of golf and women prosecute the sport of man. It was but a moderate-sized hotel, and, having been fortunate enough to secure a pleasant suite of rooms, I could retreat into my lair whensoever the gambollings or growlings of my fellow-brutes threatened to disturb my composure.

Saturday being the day of my arrival, the next day was Sunday and unconscionably dull. To relieve the tedium somewhat I dined with the menagerie. At the table next to mine there sat a girl who reminded me of nothing so much as a little white rabbit—she was so blonde of colouring, so mentally and physically fluffy. With her was her mother—a person of sagacious stork-like aspect whose bland eye and beaky profile surveyed the scene from the height of a neck characteristically long

and adroit of movement. That eye detecting me seated lonely at my bachelor table, she by a deft manœuvre changed places with her daughter, so that Miss Bunny of the dimpling cheek and downy hair faced me in all her charm.

"Why am I to sit this side, mother?" I heard her whisper. She glanced side-long from beneath her lashes toward a neighbouring table.

"There is such a draught, my darling," Mrs. Stork returned, responding to her daughter's question. Then answering her glance, "Sir Alfred left this morning."

Mistress Bunny sent one little sigh in the train of the departed Alfred, then apparently dismissed him. A moment later she had lifted a demure engaging glance at me from out of the folds of her serviette.

My vanity was little flattered to discover this inspection followed by a disappointed droop at the corners of her mouth. Plainly I was no welcome substitute for the absent Alfred. Possibly I was twice as old.

Two evenings later Miss Bunny sat again in the draught. For Sir Alfred's table was once more occupied. A young, good-looking man sat there—a stranger, apparently, for the Storks made no show of recognising him. I had thought the evening chilly, but Mrs. Stork to all appearance thought otherwise, for she leaned forward and loosened a pink lace scarf the girl wore round her shoulders—loosened it till it left her soft little throat and shoulders bared.

"You look so heated, dear Dolly," she exclaimed, tenderly.

"Yes, mother darling," the girl responded with a shiver.

The eye of Mrs. Stork, suffused by the gentlest solicitude, sought mine. I

noticed then that my long-necked neighbour was exceptionally smart. And she wore a new and very fine cap. It occurred to me that Mr. Stork had in all probability been gathered to his feathered fathers.

At times, as you know, I am subject to strange impressions. The aura I have mentioned as surrounding houses reveals itself to me as

surrounding persons.

Dinner was over, and

I was engaged on my

filberts when suddenly

my surface chilled as

though a wind passed

over it. My hair lifted.

The phenomenon

known as goose-skin

shivered through me.

At the same time I

was conscious of an

eerie high-pitched

wailing. I looked

round quickly. All

the doors were closed.

There was no opened

window whence

draught or sound

might enter. All that

had happened was

that the young man

at the next table had

left his place and was

just about to make his

exit by the swinging

door. He must have

passed behind me at

the moment I had

heard that wailing.

I observed him later

in the smoke-room.

There was nothing

about him to warrant

the uncanny or un-

wanted. He was a

well-grown, fresh-

faced youngster of

about twenty-four. He

had the manner and bearing of a youth

of breeding. He sat apart with a some-

what reserved air, smoking and watching

a game of billiards. It was a close game,

and most of the men in the room were

following it with interest. A few bets

even were exchanged.

Once I noticed the young man, at a

moment when all eyes were bent on a

crucial stroke, suddenly flash a swift

glance round the room, and discovering

no eye upon him, fling up his head and break into a short, rough laugh. I was sitting near, and it struck on my ear with a jar of savagery. An instant later his face was composed, his looks were on the game, his lips were set about his cigarette. One or two persons turned round sharply in his direction, as though they also had heard and wondered. He



"BREAK INTO A SHORT, ROUGH LAUGH"

met their eyes quietly, and with his air of reserve. But I was not deceived. "That young man, for all his fresh-facedness, is meditating a mischief," I decided. The recollection of my impression came back. I felt uncomfortable, for if ever a laugh threatened murder that laugh of his did.

In the course of the evening I addressed some commonplace to him. Was he a golfer? He answered pleasantly. He



had an agreeable voice ; his eyes were of an engaging blue ; his well-cut features lightened as he talked. I thought his adversary, whosoever he might be, must have treated him badly indeed to rouse such rancour in a youth so well favoured. Some love affair, possibly.

Yet was he not inconsolable, for by ten o'clock next day he had succumbed to the charms of Miss Bunny. I met him with his case of clubs as I went up the hotel steps. "Bitten with the fever?" I interrogated. "Not badly, sir," he answered. "Only lady sitting at table next me—lady with long neck dropped her knitting. Awfully civil when I picked it up. Asked me to show her girl how to make a tee."

A soft little voice at my side insinuated sibilantly.

"I'm ready now, Mr. Carvill. Mother has bought me a new driver. Don't you think it sweetly pretty with that band of blue leather on it?"

He turned and looked down at the

narrow little face with its prominent pink lips and white teeth. He ran a cool eye over her features and smartly-clad form. His slight moustache lifted as though he smiled. He turned and went down the steps. At the foot he dropped a pace behind, his eyes appraising her the while he adjusted a strap of his clubs. Then he glanced round with that same look I had seen the previous evening. Nobody being at hand he lifted up his head—and laughed. The jar of it came grating on the air. My skin rose in pin points. I heard a muffled wailing.

Then they disappeared round the corner, a couple of comely young persons chattering in the sunlight.

I passed into the house and into the drawing-room. At a window half concealed behind a curtain Mrs. Stork craned her long neck. Every line of her betokened exultation. Complacent satisfaction played about her beak. Hearing me she turned. She made two steps in my direction. I fled precipitately.

## CHAPTER II.

THAT night young Carvill sat at the Stork table. Little Miss Bunny dimpled and frisked, lifting shy silly glances to him from beneath her pale lashes. She wore no scarf at all that evening, and she shivered in her sleeveless frock. Mrs. Stork's cap was wondrous fine.

Carvill accepted their attentions with a kind of absent nonchalance. He seemed out of sorts, being pale and self-absorbed. But I noticed his glances linger with a curious stare on the undulant curve of the girl's white throat. Once meeting his look she blushed and fluttered, shielding her eyes with her pale-fringed lids. I thought the youth forgetful of his breeding. Mrs. Stork's blandishments were not improving—as they were not calculated to improve—his-manners. I noticed that he drank a good deal of wine.

In the smoke-room later he was hilarious, not to say uproarious. I thought if little Miss Bunny could have heard him talk, his fresh, young, handsome face would have lost some of its charm for her. I wondered whether, had she heard certain views of his, Mrs. Stork would have trusted poor little Bunny of the brain of thistledown so much in his company. But nobody

made it his business to acquaint either mother or daughter with the opinions of this avowed young prodigal.

Miss Bunny started off next morning to complete her education in that matter of a tee. Mrs. Stork stood in the hotel portico, her be-ribboned and rosetted cranium bobbing with a fatuous contentment on her long neck.

"Such a very nice young man," I heard her remark to an acquaintance. The acquaintance nodded.

"Who is he?" she asked.

I caught complacent whisperings.

"Very good connections—wealthy squire—eldest son."

The lady nodded again, interested. Then she glanced somewhat wistfully in the direction of a daughter of her own—a person hopelessly plain of face, who stood brandishing her clubs and talking loudly of some marvellous stroke she had made.

"Do you think so much golf-playing improves girls' looks?" she questioned anxiously.

"My girl Dolly doesn't play much," Mrs. Stork returned, with that air of condescension adopted by the mother of beauty to the mother whose ducklings are but plain. "In fact she hasn't got



"CARVILL SAT AT THE STORK TABLE."

further than learning to make a tee—whatever a tee may be."

"I think it's that waggly way they swing their sticks before they knock the ball. That's either a tee or a bunker. They do give such queer names in golf. But really I don't fancy modern girls have the complexions girls had when they worked samplers."

I was on the point of rising. It was impossible to appreciate Chamberlain's discomfiture at the hands of wily old Kruger during this sort of thing. But

at that moment Mrs. Stork extended her wings and swooped upon me.

"Pardon, my lord," she began, with the lofty air inseparable from her long neck, "but may I borrow your *Times* a moment? I am solicitous about my friend Sir Alfred Baxendale, who is yachting in the Mediterranean. I will return it to you immediately."

I delivered it to her.

"Pray do not trouble to return it, madam," I said; "I provide myself with it solely for the pleasure of presenting it

to the first person who does me the honour of asking for it."

I bowed and rose. Then I repaired to my room and raged. I had read two lines of an exciting despatch, and these were merely prefatory. It would be hours before a paper would be available in the reading-room. Not twenty minutes later a note on scented crocodile paper, my *Times* and a popular novel were brought to me. The note ran thus: "Mrs. (I forget the name, but I fancy it was not Stork) presents her compliments to Lord Syfret, and thanks him extremely for the *Times*. She begs at the same time to lend him a copy of *East Lynne*, which he may not have read, and which may serve to amuse him in this very dull hotel."

I returned the volume with thanks, assuring Mrs. Stork that I never read novels. I gave orders that should any lady under whatsoever pretext attempt to make her way into my rooms she was to be inexorably repulsed. Then I breathed once more and dined that evening by myself. Later I strolled in the gardens. There was a bench whence I could hear the sea break while I smoked. The night was dark, and I had sat some minutes before I perceived the red glow of another cigar a few yards from me. In the dark I distinguished an undefined mass. Then a silly little voice exclaimed:

"I like a man to be awfully good-looking, Mr. Carvill."

Mr. Carvill took two puffs at his cigar. Then he said, indifferently:

"Ah!"

After a pause the silly voice remarked again:

"Don't you like good-looking girls, Mr. Carvill?"

"I prefer 'em decent-looking," Carvill admitted without enthusiasm.

"I suppose you like dark girls best?"

"O, I like 'em all colours. It's a change, you know."

There was a longer pause. Then the voice this time depressed was heard again:

"That's a good-looking girl who sits at the table in the left hand window, don't you think—the girl with rather a red nose?"

"Is her nose red? Good figure. Wears white hats."

"Well, they were once white. But the sea does spoil things so dreadfully. You would never think I've only worn that blue hat I wore this morning once before, now would you?"

Perhaps Mr. Carvill was not listening. Anyhow he answered "No," which was certainly not the answer poor little Bunny was seeking. She was silent for quite an appreciable time.

Then she started again bravely:

"I did so like that heather coat you wore this morning, Mr. Carvill."

Mr. Carvill took out his cigar and yawned. Then he lifted up his head—and laughed. The bench gave a sudden lurch. There was a flutter of skirts as though she had started up, and a smothered little cry.

"O, you said you'd never do it again," she panted. "You know—O, you know how it frightens me. Let me go. O, let me go."

He smothered an imprecation. Apparently he took her by the shoulders and forced her down on to the bench again.

"I told you," he protested savagely, "it's only a habit. For Heaven's sake don't keep on about it so. I did theatricals once and had to laugh like that and caught the trick."

"Let me go. *Let me go*," she insisted. "Mr. Carvill, you are hurting my arm."

His voice changed. A red glow made a hissing curve in the darkness, as he threw his cigar away.

"I'm awfully sorry," he apologised. "Horribly rude of me. I forgot. I get savage when it's noticed."

Plainly Miss Bunny was frightened.

"I want to go in," she whimpered.

"You won't mention it. Promise you won't mention it."

"I promise. No, don't you come. Good-night."

"Good-night. I say, mayn't I, though—just one? I did last night, you know."

But Bunny's white skirts had rustled away in the darkness.

He resumed his seat and lighted another cigar. He puffed it slowly into condition. Then he lifted up his head—and laughed.

## CHAPTER III.

FROM the hotel steps next morning Mrs. Stork watched them start. Little Bunny wore a new frock and a serious air that suited its pink frills and flounces ill. She glanced once with beseeching eyes into her mother's face, and then, with a curious sidelong apprehension, at the fresh-coloured profile above her.

The storcine visage smiled with a smile that granite might have envied for its obduracy. Poor little Bunny, seeing it, shuddered, and shouldered her club with the band of blue leather about it. She tripped along beside him, stealing frightened glances up at him so long as they were visible. Then Mrs. Stork turned and ascended the steps, still smiling.

She had gained the doorway when her glance caught me. She coughed, and retraced her way as though seeking something. Finally, with an absent air, she sidled across and sat down at the opposite end of the verandah. I had made up my mind the previous evening. The opportunity presented. I am not wholly devoid of heroism, as my conduct on this occasion shows. I walked over to where she sat. I bowed and extended my *Times*.

"Your friend Sir Alfred Baxendale arrived at Nice last evening," I began. "Perhaps you would like to see for yourself."

She fairly blushed. She lifted and flapped her wings and hopped to her long legs.

"How excessively good of you," she simpered. "Really, how can I thank you."

I sat down as far from her as my powers of vocalisation and the subject at my tongue's end made advisable.

"Your daughter seems fond of golf," I said.

"Devoted," she answered.

"She is a pretty little girl."

Her own and her maternal instincts struggled. Her own had the victory.

"She is not seventeen," she murmured, adding in low tones, "I was myself but a child when I married my late husband."

"Ah!" I answered, abstractedly.

There was a pause, during which the stork's eyes fathomed mine, seeking avidly an answer to the question as to whether my interest in Dolly were conjugal or merely step-fatherly.

To keep to the subject of Dolly, for though my intentions were neither the one nor the other, it was of Dolly I desired to speak. "An only child?" I suggested.

Mrs. Stork nodded. That my interest should extend to other members of the family pointed rather in a step-paternal direction.

"An only daughter," she assented, evasively.

I concluded that Dolly had possibly some half-dozen brothers. But I concealed my suspicion, while Mistress Stork stole a plump, complacent hand to her head and settled her cap ribbons. Then she cast down her eyes and waited.

"You know Mr. Carvill?"

It was not a question she expected. She re-arranged her views. An interest in Carvill suggested jealousy on my part, in which case—Mrs. Stork raised her lids and looked directly into my eyes. Once more she was merely maternal.

"O, yes," she said, less sweetly. "He has been here for nearly a week. We have seen a great deal of him. Such a very nice young man we think him."

"Ah!" I said.

She stole a sharp glance toward me. Plainly this was jealousy. I thought the storcine vanity ruffled. But if not mother, why not daughter?

"My Dolly has quite taken to him," she insinuated tentatively.

"You will pardon me," I answered. "He who does not confine himself to his own affairs generally makes a fool of himself; but I should like to say a word about this same young Carvill. Ladies"—here I bowed with my best air—"ladies are proverbially single-minded. But is it altogether wise to allow Miss Dolly to spend so much time in the company of a stranger?"

"It is so good of you to advise me," she murmured. "I need always somebody to advise me," she added in a flutter. The step-paternal theory was working uppermost again.

"I am interested in young people," I asserted, distantly.

"It is so good of you," she murmured a second time. "But Mr. Carvill has been so well brought up, Lord Syfret."

"I haven't a doubt of it," I agreed;



"I am speaking on general principles. To tell the truth, the boy has a rough way." I was recalling the previous evening. "He is a little strange."

"If there were anybody else," she said, "Dolly feels so lonely. She is such a loving child. She must attach herself to somebody. Now if an older man—someone more responsible—someone I could trust implicitly——"

"The girls here are good golfers and seem friendly with one another," I interrupted. Mrs. Stork bridled her long neck. She stared at me somewhat coldly. But she still maintained her smiling front.

"Dolly is timid with girls," she said. "and the girls here are mere hoydens. To tell the truth, Lord Syfret, Dolly—little puss—prefers masculine society. She is so fond of intellectual and progressive thought."

I mentally reviewed poor little Bunny's cranial development. I remembered her loose little lips and prominent teeth.

"Indeed," I responded, without a smile.

"Yet she is nothing of a blue," she added, in a hurry.

"I am sure of it," I said.

"Perhaps you play golf, Lord Syfret?" Mrs. Stork suggested, with a sudden change of front.

"Heaven forbid!"

"Or croquet?" Dolly said, yesterday——"

"Nor croquet, madam."

Mrs. Stork beamed all at once dignified. It began possibly to dawn upon her that my interest was without intention. But she made one more effort.

"You are like me," she said, insinuatingly. "You are above the trivialities of life. All that you need to complete your happiness is quiet and congenial companionship——"

"You are right, madam," I assented, "the most quiet and congenial of all companionships—the company of books."

She rose. "Lord Syfret," she said with dignity, and not without acrimony, "I thank you extremely for your kind consideration. My belief in human nature would be greatly strengthened, could I but think you had spoken from some other than mere personal motives. However, despite your evident hostility—quite unfounded—against dear Mr. Carvill, I shall be careful not to breathe a word to the poor young man of your unwarranted—may I say unworthy—suspicions. The boy is so sensitive, so generous—he would be cut to the heart, indeed, if he knew what an implacable secret enemy he has. Your *Times*, Lord Syfret, and *Good-morning!*"

I dined that evening in my room alone.

## CHAPTER IV.

"MR. CARBLE says, 'Damn you!' and why didn't you get his knife properly ground?" the waiter inquired of the porter as I crossed the hall the next morning.

"Tell Mr. Carble damn him, and his knife can't be ground not any sharper than it is," the porter rejoined, in a tone of suppressed exasperation. "The fuss he's made about that knife of his nobody wouldn't believe. It's been at the cutler's three times already. If he wants it done any better, he'd best set to and do it himself."

"That's what he seems to think. He was sharpening away at it on his strop like mad when I come down. He says he'll put a hedge on it to raise Cain."

At this juncture they perceived me. The conversation ceased abruptly.

Carvill passed some minutes later with his clubs. From a glance of his I

had met the previous evening, I was aware that Mrs. Stork had faithfully reported my remarks. I reflected that again before I died I had rendered myself ridiculous. For Miss Bunny and Carvill had spent the whole evening together, and had risen early in order to go round the links before breakfast.

This morning he was all smiles. Seeing his fresh young face beaming friendly upon me, I experienced some discomfiture. I never regret, or I might have regretted my lack of discretion.

"Golfing again," I exclaimed, returning his salute.

"Golfing again," he assented, cheerily. He was a youth of contradictions. The night before the smoke-room had fairly resounded with his uproarious and iniquitous doctrine. This morning he was boyish and fresh-skinned.



"EVE WAS THE FIRST OF YOU"

Mrs. Stork came out as usual to see them off. She bowed to me with an air of majestic forbearance.

"Everybody has gone over to North Berwick to see Balfour play, they tell me," she gurgled, "so you two will have the golf course to yourselves."

"Mother," I heard little Bunny whisper, agitatedly, "what has he got a big knife in his pocket for?"

Mrs. Stork laughed and frowned together. She patted the girl's pale cheek.

"Little, little mammy's silly," she exclaimed. "Why, the knife of course is to—to cut the tee with."

"O, but how stupid. You can't cut

tees, mother. O! I don't want to go with him. I don't want to go with him."

There was no smile now on Mrs. Stork's face. Granite again might have envied her.

"I shall take you home to-morrow, then," she said, in tones that whipped.

The girl put a faltering face up.

"No, no," she whispered, with a little sob, "not that, mother dear. I'll—I'll go with him."

She went.

At the corner where the path turned out of sight I saw him pat his pocket. Then he lifted up his head—and laughed.

## CHAPTER V.

AT lunch the coffee-room was empty. There had been an exodus, indeed, to see Mr. Balfour play.

I had just sat down to my table and was grumbling about something or another—in hotels the man who grumbles loudest is the man best served—when Mrs. Stork entered alone. The triumph in the eye she cast on me was complacent to fatuity. Had she belonged to a different class she would have set her elbows on her hips and hurled a "yah!" at me.

Instead of this she beckoned a waiter and asked him loudly, "Have you seen Miss—the name scarcely sounded like 'Stork'—and Mr. Carvill?"

"No, ma'am," the answer was, "not since they went out after breakfast."

"Not since they went out after breakfast," Mrs. Stork reiterated for my benefit.

She ordered champagne. Then she set the full-stop of her eye upon me with an eloquence denied to speech. "If this don't mean business, my lord," said that eye of hers, "I'll just thank you to tell me what it does mean."

At the moment I should have been thankful if I could. The conviction that I could not, spoilt the flavour of my lobster. My appetite was gone. I thought I would try a stroll across the golf-links.

"Heavens! sir, where are you going in such a hurry?" a rasping voice demanded. I had run full tilt into somebody entering as I left.

I did not waste breath in answering. I picked up the two heaviest-looking

sticks the hat-stand held. One I kept for myself, the other I put into the hands of the hall-porter.

"You are to come with me," I said.

"Your lordship," he protested, "it's as much as my place is worth."

"Leave that to me. I have something for you."

Perhaps my manner impressed him, for without further ado he grasped the stick and strode after me. He was a powerful fellow I was pleased to note.

"Is it Mr. Carble, your lordship?" he puffed. He was scarcely in condition for the pace we were making.

"I am anxious about a lady who went out with him this morning."

"Not been back since?"

"No."

The man whistled apprehensively.

"Looks bad," he said. "His man was saying only last night he didn't like the looks of him. He's got a brother in an asylum. Can't really get on any faster, my lord."

The links were a desert of sand, with here and there bunkers, and furze clumps, and artificial water-courses, which did duty for "burns." The ground was of the roughest, up hills and down dales of miniature size, with here and there smooth stretches of grass for "putting greens." There was not a soul in sight. But with that irregular formation we might at any moment come upon them in some dip of ground, or behind some sand-hill. We kept our eyes about us, and our weapons in the background. Our sudden appearance might by some

horrible mischance precipitate matters. If indeed—— We hurried on.

If luck had not been on our side that mischance would have happened.

We were striding up a furze bank when I heard him laugh. There was no restraint or repression in it now. It rasped out terrible and long. It gashed the silent air. He had flung off the mask. God grant we were not too late!

I turned and caught the man behind me by the shoulder. I forced him to his knees. We crept up silently amid the furze. Arrived at the top we came in sight of them. They were some distance below us on a ledge in the sandy side of the slope. It would be impossible for us to approach without being seen. It would be impossible to reach them without giving him some minutes' start, for the ground was rugged and soft, and there was a hollow we must dip into and scale again before we could get to them.

Poor little Bunny sat huddled together facing the point where we crouched and the situation with distended eyes. Carvill stood over her, his profile to us, but keeping a furtive and continuous watch about him. One end of a razor strop was between his teeth, the other was in his left hand.

Along its stretched surface he slipped the sharp blade of a murderous-looking knife. I cursed the fate of circumstance. We could not advance a foot without discovering ourselves. And the slightest thing might set his knife at her throat.

"You'll never have a chance now of telling about my laugh," he said.

His speech was hindered by the ring of the strop between his teeth, but the words came clearly up the bank.

"No," she assented helplessly, her eyes fixed fascinated on him.

"It's you women who do all the mischief in the world," he went on, argumentatively. "You've got to be got rid of."

She made no answer other than an inarticulate moan.

He turned on her savagely, brandishing his knife.

"What did you say?" he demanded.

"I said yes," she cried meekly.

"So, as I said, I'm going to cut your throat the moment I get this damned knife sharp enough." Then, "What did you say?" he demanded again, brandishing the blade.

I measured the distance between us, I rose on my knees; but I feared. The slightest thing might set him on her.

"I said yes," she said meekly again.

Then, whether from sheer silliness or instinctive design, the poor little creature added feebly, "It will spoil my new frock, you know, Mr. Carvill."

I heard the big man beside me draw breath into his chest with a sob like a child's. I put my hand in warning on his shoulder. Carvill stopped sharpening his knife.

"Confound it! I never thought of that," he said.

Little Bunny had some sense after all. She saw her advantage, and made capital.

"It's so very light," she continued, looking guilelessly into his face; "it will show every stain."

"Confound it," he broke out violently, "I never thought of that. Why didn't you put on a darker one?"

"I will to-morrow," she assented, eagerly. "We can come again to-morrow. I will wear my old blue serge. That will not matter a bit."

Her voice broke. I could see by her terrible pallor the horror she was striving with.

"No," he objected. "It's going to be done now. You're not to be trusted. And by to-morrow there have got to be a thousand women less in the world. It's they do all the mischief."

But there was an air of discomfiture about him. In the ill-balance of his unhinged mind the thought of the spoiled frock affected him unpleasantly.

He sharpened his knife with an air which, though dogged, had an element of irresolution about it. He muttered to himself. Once he clenched his fist and shook it toward high heaven, the while the pupils of her eyes distended on him till their china blueness was a blackened horror.

Then he proceeded to strengthen his position by argument.

"You tell lies—all you women do," he blustered. "You deserve anything. You do nothing but deceive and cheat a man."

"But I don't," she pleaded, "I never tell big lies, Mr. Carvill, only little fibs sometimes that don't hurt anybody. Really I never do, Mr. Carvill."

Her voice half broke again.

"It's a lie, it's a lie, it's a lie," he shouted frenziedly. "I'm not going to be talked out of it. If *you* don't, other



women do, and you've got to die with the rest. You take a chap's money and you want diamonds and anything you can get. You're so confounded greedy." She stretched two trembling palms to him, palms as pink and impotent as flower-petals.

"I am not really greedy," she pro-

going to be talked out of it. I only wish there was edge enough on this confounded blade, and you'd see how little effect your talking has."

"Eve was the first of you," he began again. "She was a woman, and brought all the trouble into the world. You can't deny that."



"A MINUTE LATER HE CRIED OUT AND FELL"

tested. "Really, Mr. Carvill, I am not. I only thought you might not mind me having that golf ball. You have so many. And I didn't really expect you to give me the gloves—not if you don't want to. You're wrong if you think I am greedy."

He stuffed his fingers into his ears.

"I'm not listening. I can't hear a word you say," he said. He shuffled with his feet and hummed. "I'm not

"No," she said hopelessly, "I can't deny that, because it's in the Bible."

"Well then," he shouted, "that clinches it, and you've got to be killed for it."

She took refuge in her former plea.

"It will spoil my new frock," she cried out, piteously.

"Well, hang it, why didn't you put on some other," he vociferated.

Suddenly he broke out laughing.

"Why," he cried, "you can take it off. What a little fool you are. Of course you can take it off."

Her face fell dismally. The loose lips twitched with a grievous helplessness. And all the while we lay there afraid almost of breathing, lest we should set him on her.

"Yes, I could take it off," she faltered.

He passed his nail across the knife-edge. He flung the strop away.

"Then hang it, why don't you?" he shouted. "I'm ready now, and a precious lot I've got to do before morning."

The poor little thing made one heroic effort. She cast her eyes down shyly. I believe she actually blushed, though how her bloodless cheeks accomplished it Heaven only knows.

"O, Mr. Carvill, I should be ashamed to take my frock off with you here," she stammered modestly.

Again he was taken aback.

"I never thought of that," he said, nonplussed. "Curse it, why do you make such a fuss. I shall never have done to-night."

Her hand, resting on the sand beside her, flung up a feathery spray to the tremble of her fingers.

"If you were to go up the bank—" she faltered, with a pretty timidity, pointing directly where we lay.

("I thought, from the first, she'd caught sight of us," the porter gulped in my ear, "bless her plucky little heart and spare her")

"If you were to go up the bank," she repeated, tremulously, "I could—I

could——" She could say no more. Now Heaven grant she do not break down. It must have been fear rather than courage that sustained her, for breath and strength were spent.

I gathered myself for a rush. In any case there could be but one ending. He strode in front of her and stood there glaring. If she had cried out or shown the slightest fear he would have killed her then. But she showed no fear. Her large eyes rested on him vacantly.

"Swear you won't run away?"

Poor little creature. She had not breath enough to swear. But she nodded.

"And you won't call anyone?"

Her lips motioned "No."

He turned with an impatient oath and came clambering up the bank.

"A chap can't be a beastly cad," he muttered.

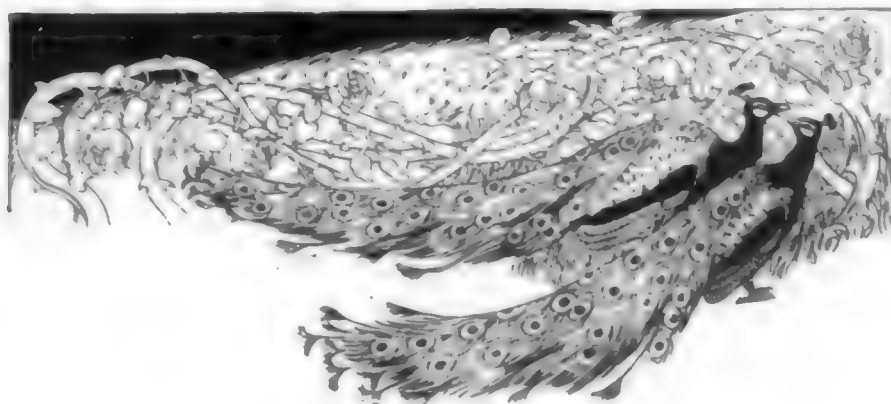
A minute later he cried out and fell. The porter's stick and muscles had effected that. We took his knife from him and secured him as well as we were able.

Then I leapt down the slope. Poor little girl! She was sitting wan and pallid, her trembling fingers fumbling at the buttons of her half-unfastened bodice.

"I saw you all the time," she whispered, "but I didn't think it would be any use."

She caught my hand clingingly. "Lord Syfret," she entreated with a little sob, "don't ever tell mother I hadn't time to fasten up my frock."

Then she slipped down from her sitting posture, and lay in a faint amid the sand.



# *Some Experiences of Lord Syfret.*

BY ARABELLA KENEALY.

## STRONHEIM'S EXTREMITY.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. SAVAGE.

I HAD called on my friend the Keeper of Coins and Medals at the Museum. We had been College chums and did not stand on ceremony.

"I shall be busy for an hour," he said, as we shook hands. He pointed to a batch of medals, marred and defaced to bewildering extent. "I am getting to the end of them. If you can come back again I shall be delighted. We will lunch together." Or if you care to remain here till I have finished, I can give you a rare old folio to dip into."

"I will remain," I replied. "I enjoy this musty odour of antiquity."

The Keeper smiled. "If you were fated to endure as much of it as I do," he returned, "you would probably prefer oxygen."

Five minutes later an attendant entered.

"A gentleman to see you, sir."

The Keeper glanced up through his spectacles displeased. He read the card before him.

"Did you tell him I am busy?"

"I told him, sir. He says it is urgent. It has to do with the Hierator coin."

"Ah!" The keeper laid down his magnifying glasses. If there were a tender spot in his heart the Hierator coin had found it. It was a superb specimen recently added to the collection under his charge. Its history was sufficiently recondite to have taxed without baffling his skill in the matter of classification, yet was it so well-preserved, the classic obverse so exquisite and clear, that even a tyro in the numismatic art like myself could not have failed to admire it. Apart from its beautiful workmanship, its value was determined by the fact that it belonged to a period whereof but few evidences remained. Moreover, it was an unique specimen, no other of its kind being known to exist. It had had a whole column of the *Times* devoted to it, a column that was a very

monument of lore. Its value in specie was variously estimated at from £50 to £2,000. It was probably worth £1,000, but the authorities of the Museum into whose possession it had come entertained not the remotest intention of parting with it. To them it was priceless, for it completed a series long incomplete.

The Keeper looked anxious. The source of the coin had not been altogether satisfactory, and he had suffered, he told me, not a few waking nightmares lest someone should turn up to establish a claim upon it.

"I will see the gentleman," he said.

He swept the mouldering bronze and silver heap before him into a drawer, which he carefully locked. Then he changed his glasses, and leaned back in his chair, his eyes on the door, an anxious fold between his brows.

"I wish I could feel secure about that Hierator," he remarked.

The attendant appeared presently ushering in a tall, thin, shabbily-dressed man. The man bowed squarely, and ceremoniously. He was obviously a foreigner.

"Herr Stronheim," the Keeper read, consulting the card and returning the bow, "what can I do for you?"

It may have been prejudice in the interests of the Hierator, but I thought he did not like the look of the man. His face was sharp and thin and his glances travelled nervously — almost furtively about the room.

"Sir, I am obliged to you," the stranger rejoined, with only a slight German accent, and in a pleasant enough voice. "I have a letter to you from Professor Von Brau, of Berlin. I take the liberty of presenting it in person."

"Von Brau, Von Brau?" the Keeper echoed dubiously, "do I know him?"

Stronheim seemed taken aback.

"I understood him to be a friend—a

friend of many years. Is it Doctor Keith Bernard I have the honour of addressing?"

"Yes, I am Dr. Bernard. With your permission I will read the letter. Please sit down."

The visitor sat down. His face was agitated. His glance still travelled furtively about the room. The Keeper reading the note observed him from time to time above his spectacles. It was briefly, I learned later, a letter of introduction. Professor Von Brau, dating

"You now remember the Professor?" Stronheim queried.

The Keeper shook his head.

"One meets so many gentlemen at conferences, and I fear I cannot for the moment recall your friend."

The German leaned forward in his chair. "May I nevertheless hope—" he began, hurriedly.

He stopped short. The Keeper noticed that his hand on the rail of his chair was trembling. It occurred to him, as it did

to me, that the man had had no breakfast.

"I made the journey on purpose—" Stronheim began again. His pinched face suggested at what cost.

"I shall be glad," my friend responded, kindly, "if I can help you in any way. I am afraid if it should be a position you are seeking—"

Stronheim shook his head. "It is not that," he said. "You are very good. It is not that, but the matter is of much moment to me."

The Keeper implied by a gesture that he awaited Herr Stronheim's pleasure.

"You have here a coin—"

"The Hierator," Bernard interjected.

"The Hierator. May I be permitted to see it?"

The Keeper kept his eyes fixed on the other. Plainly this was a claimant.

"The Hierator is on public view in Coin Room No. III., in the centre case, facing the window," he said briefly, adding, "If you wish it I will send a man to point it out to you."

"Sir, you are good; but I wish more. I ask for the privilege to examine it closely—to take it in my hands."

The request was unusual. Bernard scanned him. Certainly, his credentials



"LET ME EXAMINE IT"

from a medical college in Berlin, recalled himself to the recollection of Dr. Keith Bernard, whom he had met some years earlier at an Antiquarian Congress. He begged to be allowed to present to Dr. Keith Bernard, Herr Stronheim, a gentleman with whom he himself was but slightly acquainted, though he came to him warmly commended by friends. There was some small matter wherein he should regard it as an honour to himself and a personal kindness if Dr. Keith Bernard would assist Herr Stronheim.



did not warrant the placing of much trust in him. He was shabby and ill-at-ease, and his boots, though decently blacked, were broken. In Britain we are apt to think lightly of men with broken boots, especially if we have reason for doubting that they have breakfasted. Moreover, I could see my friend was jealous for his Hierator.

"The request is unusual," he objected. "May I inquire the object?"

Stronheim evaded the question. "I but wish to take it in my hands one moment."

"You will surely explain your purpose."

"Pardon me, I must beg of you to permit me to reserve that."

Bernard hardened. Obviously no good was intended to his treasure.

"I fear, sir," he said, civilly, but firmly, "I fear, then, I cannot comply with your request."

The German made a gesture of protest.

"Sir," he exclaimed, "you surely do not suspect me of—of what can you suspect me?"

"The request is unusual, and you give me no reason."

Stronheim put a hand to his throat and turned away. The fingers of the other hand grappled convulsively with the chair rail. After a minute he faced round.

"I cannot tell you the importance of this matter to me," he faltered. "My future—the future of others—depends upon it."

My friend had warm spots in his heart beside that occupied by the Hierator. I saw him weaken.

"Bless me," he said cordially, "if you are so anxious you shall see it."

"I too?" I motioned with my lips. He assented, smiling.

He took up his velvet skull cap, and cutting short the Teuton's effusive and guttural gratitude, with a British and kindly "Not at all, not at all," he preceded us across a lobby and up sundry steps to Room No. III. of Coins and Medals.

The great room, its walls lined with shelved glass cases, its space pervaded by them, only narrow intersections being left for the passage of visitors, was apparently empty; but a moment later a custodian, bearing his wand of office, respectfully joined us.

We went quickly down the narrow passages, the cases filled with green and mouldy-looking treasures seeming to

engulf us in a tomb-like silence. Nobody was there, since only the few take interest in coins.

The Keeper stopped before a case—he could have found his way there in the dark, I believe—and in the centre rested the Hierator, on the velvet bosom of a handsome casket. An inscription beneath recorded its date, and briefly a portion of its history.

Bernard, for the moment mindless of the stranger's possible designs upon his treasure, pointed it out with pride.

"There he is," he said, smiling, "there he is—the finest coin in our collection."

The German gazed with greedy eyes. He pressed his features close against the glass, examining it absorbedly. There was a strange light on his face.

The Keeper watched him, as did I. What was his motive? His eyes fastened on it as upon some long-loved prize.

He thrust a pale long-fingered hand toward it.

"Let me examine it," he broke out hoarsely.

I thought Bernard regretted his concession. But he was a man of his word. He fitted a key to the door. The custodian, wand in hand, stood by. He maintained a vigilant scrutiny of the stranger. Obviously he did not like his looks. Possibly he, too, suspected that the shabby foreigner had had no breakfast.

Bernard took the leather casket from the case, and held it a moment in his hand. He looked with pleasure and affection on its occupant. Then he passed it over to the German.

Stronheim bowed as he stretched his trembling fingers for it. His eyes devoured its every curve and marking. He bent above it with an ashen face. Soon he lost consciousness of everything beside. He did not see the respectful half-questioning glance of the custodian upon the Keeper, nor the Keeper's fixed scrutiny upon himself. He put a finger on the coin with a suggestion of lifting it from its casket.

"May I be permitted?" he inquired.

Bernard nodded. His face was grave. Certainly one might have suspected that this was the Hierator's lawful owner. Only one in whose possession it had been could love it as this man plainly did. The German removed it, setting the empty casket on a neighbouring case.

At that moment a man entering the

room by a door at the further end suddenly stumbled, and, with three clattering steps to recover his balance, and a loud guttural cry, measured his length on the floor. We all instinctively turned. There was a sound as of metal striking wood and ringing sharply, a muttered exclamation, and the German was down on hands and knees feeling and searching with his long blanched fingers.

"I started and dropped it," he explained tremulously.

We had turned our heads but for a second. As my glance swung back from the prostrate man at the end of the room, I thought I saw something fall and disappear. In a moment Bernard was on his knees. A few swift looks and sweeps of his hand sufficed to show him that the coin had vanished. If it were there at all it would take time to find. He turned his eyes from Stronheim's face, bent white and anxious on the floor, instinctively towards the figure of the man, who now erect, was leaving the room. Something in the latter's threadbare aspect, linked with the recollection of his guttural cry, seemed to impress him. He whispered the custodian. A moment later the custodian's steps were echoing loud and hollow down the room. He followed the stranger out through the lower doorway.

Bernard furtively turned up a coat sleeve, mentally measuring his strength against that of his adversary. He glanced at me with a grim expression.

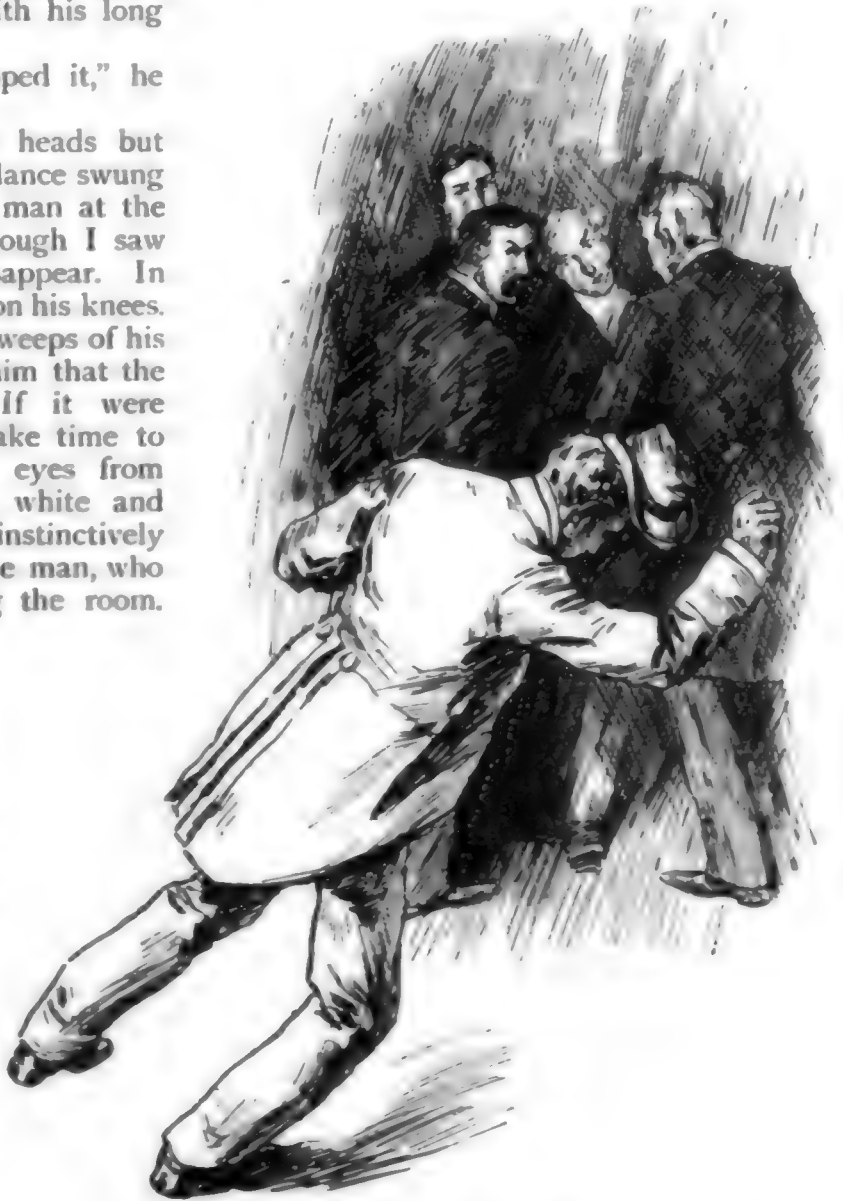
"Sir, how can I express my regret," the German apologised, still searching with agitated eye and hand. "It was unpardonably awkward. But I am not well to-day. The man falling unnerved me. I let the Hierator drop. It must have rolled far."

There was a strange exultation in his voice. Under cover of his stooping posture he smiled secretly. He searched

with care, but the anxiety of some minutes earlier had died out of his face.

"You can laugh as you like, my man," the Keeper muttered in a savage aside, "but your troubles are only beginning. Britons are not so easily fooled."

The custodian now came back. He nodded to his superior's questioning eye.



"SUDDENLY STUMBLED"

Then he too went on hands and knees, apparently searching, but his gaze made significantly for one after another of the shabby German's pockets, as though he were speculating as to which at that moment concealed the Hierator.

Stronheim grew anxious. He began to search feverishly, and with a degree of wild aimlessness. He swept his glances near and far. His features worked. Then he put a curb on himself and fell to more methodically. He took a knife from his

pocket. We kept our eyes on him. He opened a blade and proceeded to slip it carefully some six or eight feet's length along the cracks between the boards. He probed thus every crack of the passage in which we stood. This failing, "Mein Gott!" he said, in hollow tones, straightening himself for a moment to get the ache out of his back. With a haggard face he started further down and worked slowly up the floor, dragging the knife-blade vigilantly in the crevices, his ear inclined, his fingers a-search for the clink of metal as though his life depended on it. He carried this manœuvre several yards further in either direction up the room.

As one after another the cracks failed him, his hands trembled visibly. The Keeper and custodian had risen to their feet. They viewed him with disapproving faces, faces that spoke of rising exasperation at this which seemed to them a farce.

The German, absorbed in his efforts, paid them no heed. Bernard turned, closed the door of the case whence the Hierator had been taken, and locked it.

A party of children entering and detecting the group—one man on hands and knees—clattered hurriedly up the room, the small feet of the younger members of the party multiplying the footsteps of those bigger by hollow two-to-ones as they scrambled along, keeping pace with their elders. The custodian motioned them. They remained at a distance disappointed, but breathlessly whispering and watching with widely-opened eyes.

"Mein Gott!" the German exclaimed again, as he came to the end of the longer span of cracks without finding anything. The sweat stood thick on his face. He looked up to where we stood regarding him.

"I have never seen such a thing," he cried. "It dropped. I saw it strike the floor and roll, and then it disappeared. I could swear it rolled no farther than this."

He indicated a spot with a broken boot.

The Keeper and custodian regarded the boot.

A clock clanged twelve. Stronheim started up.

"If you permit it," he addressed Bernard, "I will return in an hour, and search till it is found. Lock up the room and I will go carefully over every inch.

I have at a quarter past twelve an appointment with the Consul. But I will return at once."

The custodian laughed outright.

The Keeper regarded him sternly.

"Monstrous!" he said. "Do you suppose I shall allow you to leave this place until the coin is found? Is it of any use to continue this farce?"

Stronheim stood staring at him.

Then "Himmel!" he protested, "do you suspect me of stealing it?"

Bernard made a movement of impatience.

"The coin must be found before you leave," he rejoined shortly.

"Must I lose my appointment with the Consul, sir?"

"Undoubtedly."

The German wiped his brow helplessly.

"What an unfortunate I am," he muttered, "and just as I hoped everything. Sir, I swear to you—sir, I am a man of birth and education. I assure you——"

Bernard cut him short.

"I have made no accusation, I only demand the coin. A few minutes since it was in your possession, where is it now?"

"On the floor, sir, assuredly, somewhere on the floor. It must be to be found."

"Assuredly," my friend returned, "it must be to be found."

The German went again on hands and knees.

The children from their distance watched him breathlessly. They also ran their sharp eyes over the floor. To them the scene was absorbingly interesting. What was the man on the floor so anxiously hunting? And would he find it? And if he did not find it what would happen? It was a thousand times more diverting than old pennies and mouldy things in glass cases. The German rose to his feet again.

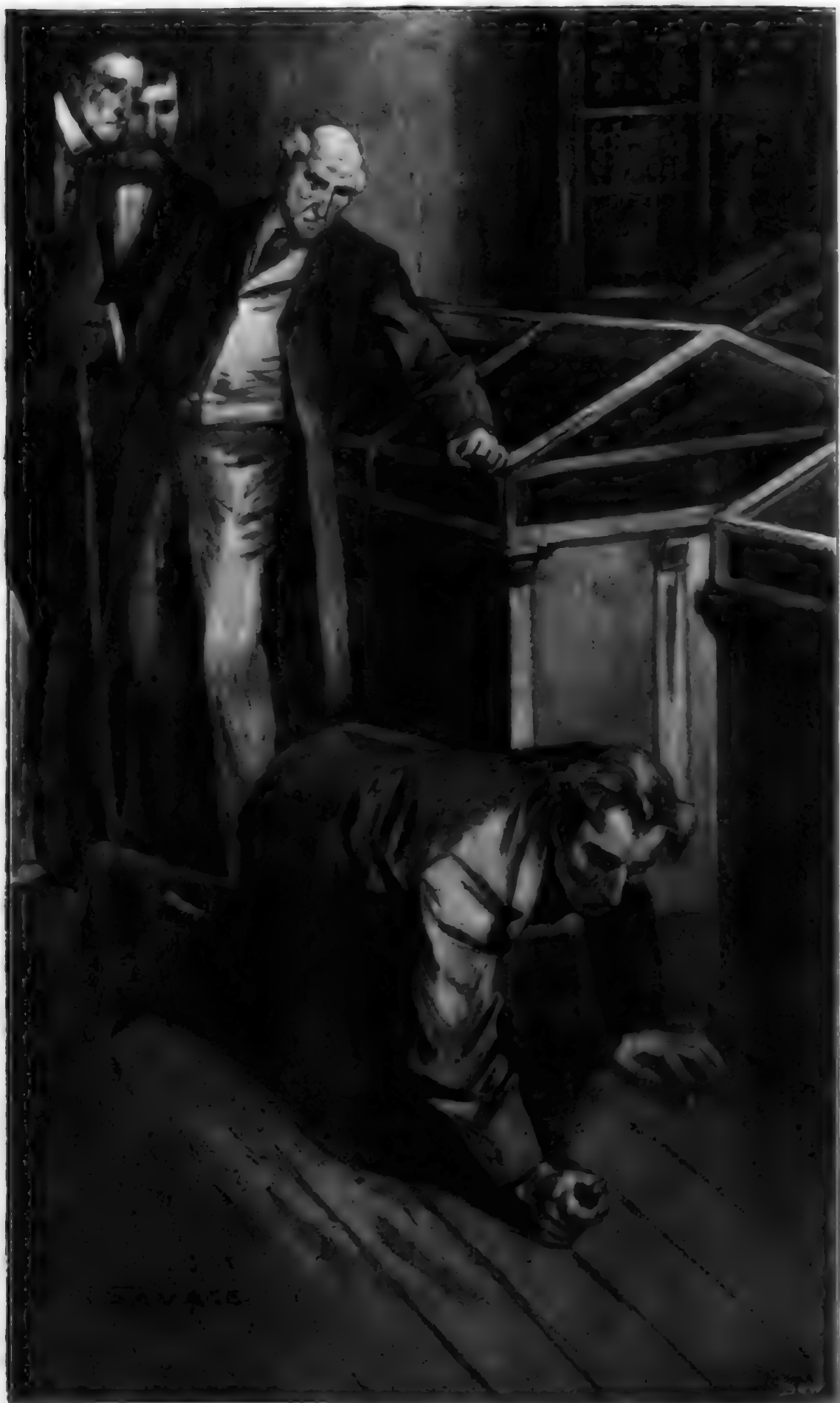
"I have failed," he admitted, spreading his hands out with a fatalistic gesture. He glanced towards the fog-darkened windows. "The light is little," he deprecated.

"It will be my unpleasant duty to have you searched," the Keeper said, "unless the coin be at once produced. I have wasted time enough."

Yet he seemed sorry for the man, as I was. He was obviously a person of cultivation, despite his poor condition.

Stronheim started as though he had been struck.

"Searched?" he echoed, in a hollow



"HE PROBED EVERY CRACK IN THE PASSAGE"



voice. "Searched!" he repeated terror-stricken. He steadied himself against the corner of a cabinet. He panted as if he had run a race. The Keeper observed him. Why should he dread being searched if he had not the coin? If he were innocent he would surely court inquiry. There was but one inference to be drawn.

"It is our routine practice," he said shortly.

The German was taken with convulsive shuddering. The custodian eyed him contemptuously. He glanced impatiently at his superior. What was the good of this fuss? Why did he not straightway hand him over to the police? He attracted Bernard's attention. His lips formed a voiceless word. Bernard shook his head. Give the poor devil a chance, he indicated compassionately, only—his face hardened—the Hierator must be found.

The German composed himself. "I refuse to be searched," he cried. He wiped the sweat-crop from his brow. "I refuse to be searched," he repeated.

"Why should you mind if you are innocent?"

"Why should I mind? I mind much. It is—it is—" he was manifestly seeking excuse—"it is an insult. You suspect me of theft. I come to you as one gentleman to another, sir. I bring a letter of introduction from Professor Von Brau—"

"I have no alternative," the Keeper answered. He had now not a doubt as to the other's guilt. His dread of being searched convicted him out of hand.

"I will look again," Stronheim said desperately, sweeping a swift instinctive glance toward the door. But the custodian forestalled him, moving a few paces between it and the suspect. Stronheim understood and glared upon him. He made a gesture of despair. Then he took out a pencil, and marking off an area still larger than that he had already gone over, and using his handkerchief clusterwise, he swept every inch of the floor. He found nothing.

He shook his head and muttered:

"I will never be searched."

He took a box of matches from a pocket, and striking half a dozen at a time, he scanned the boards minutely.

Still he found nothing.

"Gott im Himmel," he muttered again, "they shall never search me."

He started slipping his knife along the

cracks again, taking the wider area. But nothing came of it. He went over the ground once more: with no result. He sat up, and covering his face with his hands moaned under his breath.

"I give it up," he wailed brokenly. "Fate is against me. Some devil is in it."

"You will submit to be searched."

He threw out his palms. His eyes seemed to start out of his head.

"Then I am a lost man," he exclaimed.

"You had better give the coin up," Bernard remarked quietly.

"I have it not." Yet his hand went instinctively to an inner pocket.

"If you do not give it up I must send for the police."

Stronheim stared stupidly before him.

"I am a lost man," he mumbled. Then he suddenly swayed, and fell forward on his face. In the excitement ensuing the children drew nearer. They thought he was dead. It was a rare morning's entertainment indeed—to see a man die.

"Shall I take it from him, sir?" the custodian queried, his hand on the German's coat.

The Keeper shook his head.

"It's here in his breast pocket," the man urged. "I can feel it through the cloth."

"Let it be," the other said. "Undo his collar, and open the window."

Stronheim had just unclosed his lids and was blinking the misery awaiting him into his consciousness, when suddenly a commotion rose among the children.

"It's mine." "No 'taint, I seed it furst." "Oh! you little liar, I seed it." "I picked it up anyways." "Give it me!" "Give it me!" "Yes giv' it 'm, he's my bruvver."

The cries waxed to a hubbub. The custodian bore down upon them. Two boys were on the point of blows. The man rapped their heads with his wand.

"Now then, clear out, you youngsters. Make yourselves scarce, I say."

The boys sobered. They eyed one another muttering fiercely. One whimpered.

"Now then, clear out, or the police will have you," the custodian threatened.

"He's got my penny," the whimpering boy protested.

"'Taint yours, and 'taint a penny," the other retorted.

The chorus began again. "You're a liar, I seed it first." "Giv' it him, he's my bruvver."

The custodian rapped heads and knuckles indiscriminately. "Police!" he called, in a loud whisper.

As the boys scuffled, something fell to the ground. A girl darted toward it. But the custodian was before her. He had it in his hand. He examined it amazedly. It was the Hierator!

Bernard strode towards him.

"God bless me," he said, taking the Hierator tenderly. "Who would have thought it? Here children," he called to the departing and depressed youngsters, "here's a shilling between you. Twopence a piece, big and little."

The German smiled faintly when they laid it before him.

"I told you," he murmured, "I am no thief. But, mein Gott, what a fright I have had!"

"Why in the name of all that is inexplicable did you refuse to be searched," the Keeper asked some minutes later, when the still faint Strenheim reclined in his room, imbibing strength from brandy and water. The other German, whom they had taken for an accomplice, and placed under detention, had been released, and the Hierator had been safely locked into its case again.

The German smiled. Then he sat up and looked at us one after the other.

He put a hand into his breast pocket, and, with an air of mystery, drew out a small object. Still smiling he held it toward Bernard.

"Good Heavens!"

—the Hierator. I thought I had—"

"So you did, sir. This is not your Hierator, though a Hierator. I picked it up in an old iron shop in Vienna. Till I chanced upon the article in your *Times* I had no notion that the coin was worth money. I brought it over to compare with yours. I had been unfortunate. An illness robbed me of a good position. My money was gone. My family was



"IT WAS THE HIERATOR"

"Where did you find it?" he demanded.

"I picked it up," the boy exclaimed. "I seed it lying be'ind the leg of a taible, and I picked it up. It's mine, not Bill's."

"It isn't either of yours," the custodian said. "It belongs here. Now then, be off with you."

He was considerably crestfallen. He had been so confident of the German's guilt.

starving. Just then a good opening offered, but it needed some £500 capital. I read your *Times*. I spent my remaining funds in coming to England. You kindly permitted me to examine the coin. I found it identical with mine. It was my last hope. If I had failed, Heaven knows what would have become of us!"

There was a moment's silence. He resumed.

"You ask me why I refused to be searched. I ask you and this gentleman"—he bowed towards me—"what chance should I have had with a Hierator, a coin understood to be unique, in my pocket. Would anybody have troubled to look further? I should have been convicted of theft—ruined. Now——"

He spread out his hands with his

former fatalistic gesture. But this time he expressed that destiny left nothing to be desired. My friend looked gloomy for the space of a minute. The uniqueness of the Hierator had been such a feather in the cap of his collection. Then the man got the better of the numismatist.

He stepped forward and shook the German's trembling hand.

"I congratulate you, sir," he said heartily. "Any museum of consequence, or private collector, will give you at least £1,000 for it."

"In the meantime," I suggested, "if you and this gentleman," indicating Stronheim, "will give me the pleasure of your company, we will go and get some lunch"



FACING THE MUSIC

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY HUGHES AND MULLINS

# *Some Experiences of Lord Syfret.*

BY ARABELLA KENEALY.

## A BEAUTIFUL VAMPIRE.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. SAVAGE.

### CHAPTER I.

**T**HERE was a flutter indeed in the little town of Argles, when it became known that Dr. Andrew had made an attempt upon the life of Lady Deverish. Andrew was a youngish, good-looking fellow, junior partner in the firm of Byrne and Andrew, the principal doctors in the place. Everybody liked him. He was as clever as he was kind. He would take equal pains to pull the ninth child of a navvy through a croup seizure as he would have done had it been heir to an earldom. Some people thought this mistaken kindness on the doctor's part—the navvy's ninth could well have been spared, especially as the navvy drank, and in any case was unable to provide properly for eight. Some even went so far as to assert that Andrew was flying in the face of Providence—to say nothing of the rate-payers—when he brought this superfluous ninth triumphantly through its fifth attack of croup. Otherwise he was as popular as a man may be in a world in which flaws and scandal lend a stimulating quality to tea and bread-and-butter, that is denied to blamelessness and good repute.

"The butler says he heard raised voices," it was whispered over dainty cups, "and then Lady Deverish shrieked for help, and he ran in and found the doctor clutching her round the throat."

"And only just in time. Her face was perfectly black!"

"Isn't it awful? Such a kind man as he has always seemed. Is there any madness in the family?"

"It is not certain. They say his mother was peculiar. Wrote books, and did other extraordinary things. Always wore very large hats with black feathers.

Quite out of fashion, Mrs. Byass tells me. She knew her."

"What have they done with him?"

"That's the strangest part of it. She wouldn't charge him: said it was all a mistake. So he just got into his carriage, and continued his rounds."

"Gracious! Strangling everybody?"

"O, I believe not."

"Her throat was bruised black and blue. Old Dr. Byrne went at once and saw to her. He got a new nurse down from London. They say it was a nurse they quarrelled about, you know."

"Well, they won't get anyone to believe that, my dear."

"No, because she was as plain as can be. And Lady Deverish's groom told cook that Dr. Andrew scarcely so much as looked at her."

"And I never heard that he admired Lady Deverish."

"Ah well, most men do."

"I don't see what she wants a nurse at all for. She's the picture of health."

"She says she suffers from nerves."

"If all of us who suffer from 'nerves' were to have trained nurses looking after us, there wouldn't be enough trained nurses to go round."

"No, but all of us are not widows with the incomes of two rich dear departed at our bankers, my dear."

Now, knowing both her charming ladyship and Andrew, I was naturally interested as to why he had put hands about her beautiful throat in anything other than loving kindness. Therefore, I made a point of drinking tea with a number of amiable and gracious persons of my acquaintance during the week following his most notable attempt. All the information I got for my pains has



been condensed into the foregoing gossip, and since it was insufficient for my purposes I set about seeking more. I called early at the Manor. I did not entirely credit rumour's whisper concerning the victim's mangled throat, but I knew Andrew's muscular lean hands, if he had been in earnest, would, to say the least of it, have rendered her retirement for the space of some days prudent, so that I did not expect to see anybody but her companion, Mrs. Lyall.

"Gracious, how ill you look!" I could not help exclaiming, as she entered.

I had known her some months earlier a buxom matron. Now she was a haggard old woman. Her features worked and twisted. She slid into a chair, her hands and members shaking like those of one with palsy. For several minutes she could not speak.

"You must have been sadly troubled," I said.

She was a mild and somewhat flaccid person, one of those plump anæmic women who give one the impression that their veins run milk. But as I spoke her face became contorted. She struggled up and brandished a trembling, clenched hand.

"If he had only done it!" she cried passionately, "if by some mercy of Providence he had only done it!"

She was transformed—distorted. It was as though some mild and milky Alderney had suddenly developed claws. She slid trembling again into her chair.

"My dear Mrs. Lyall," I remonstrated, "if he had only done it, the world would have lost a beautiful and accomplished member of your sex—and poor Andrew's career would have come to a summary and lamentable end."

"No jury would have convicted him," she protested, "*not when they knew.*" She dropped her voice and searched the room with apprehensive eyes. Then she whispered, "she is a devil."

Now I was aware that some plain and very good women are in the habit of regarding every comely member of their sex as allied in one or another way with the Father of Evil, but it was clear that some sentiment stronger than general principles was moving Mrs. Lyall.

My interest was roused. But she had come to the end of her remarks. She glanced round timorously.

"For Heaven's sake, Lord Syfret, do not mention a word of this," she stam-

mered. "I am so sadly unnerved. I scarcely know what I say. Poor Lady Deverish has been rather trying." She shut her weak lips obstinately. I assured her of my discretion. I expressed sympathy, left messages, and went my way.

Byrne had nothing to tell. "Andrew will not say a word," he said. "He was over-taxed. Been up several nights. She must have exasperated him somehow. Shouldn't have thought he had it in him. He has always been the kindest of fellows."

"What does she say?"

"Laughs it off, though she don't seem amiable. Looks as if she don't want things to come out."

"You don't mean——?"

"My dear fellow, whatever I mean, I don't say."

It has always been my habit in life to take the bull by the horns whensoever circumstances have rendered this feat at the same time possible and prudent. I determined to attempt it now. Andrew, after all, was a very mild and tractable bull, despite his recent outbreak.

"I will not disguise the object of my visit," I informed him. "You know my weakness. Anything you tell me will go no further. The ball of Argle's scandal will get no push from me. But I like to probe human motive; and you must admit the situation is suggestive."

He smiled—a nervous smile. I had never before seen him so careworn. He shook his head. "She has tied my hands," he said. "If they had let me I would have strangled her."

"I do not wonder you are hard hit," I adventured, watching him. "She is certainly a siren of the first water."

He burst out laughing. "Great Scott!" he said. "Is that what they say? Do they think I am aspiring to the Deverish's hand and acres? No, no; I am not altogether a fool."

At this moment someone ran up the stairs, and, after a preliminary knock upon the door, burst into the room.

"Please, doctor, come quick," a page-boy blurted. "There's Lady Deverish's nurse has fallen down in the road, and they say she's dying."

The same change came over Andrew that had come over Mrs. Lyall. His face became contorted. He held a clenched fist in the air. "Damn her!" he cried, and rushed out.

Now this ejaculation had every appear-

ance of applying to her ladyship's nurse, and would point to an amount of callousness on Andrew's part—considering the moribund condition of that unfortunate young person—of which I am sure he was incapable. I hasten, therefore, to inform the reader that it was intended solely and absolutely for her ladyship's bewitching self. It was as fervid and whole-souled a fulmination as I remember to have heard. It left no doubt in my mind whatsoever as to the fact of her ladyship owing her life to that timely advent of her butler. My interest was not abated. I followed Andrew out. In the next street a knot of curious persons stood assembled.

"Stand back," the doctor called as we went up. "Give her air."

The circle immediately widened, disclosing the figure of a young woman in nursing dress, lying senseless on the pavement. Her upturned face was curiously pinched and worn, though the conformation was young, and her hair fallen loose about her cheek hung in girlish rings.

"She does not look strong enough for nursing," I remarked to Byrne, who came up at the moment.

"Strong enough," he echoed testily. "Why a week ago she was sturdy and robust. The Deverish takes care of that. Can't stand sickness about her." He added half to himself, "Must be something wrong with the house. Drains bad or something. One after another, they've gone off like this." The girl now began to show signs of consciousness. She opened her eyes, and seeing Andrew, smiled faintly. Presently she sat up.

"When you feel equal to it, my dear," Dr. Byrne said, "we will help you to my

carriage, and you can drive straight back."

"Back," she repeated wildly, "where?"

"Why, to the Manor. You must——"

She interrupted him, she caught his hand. "No, no," she gasped, "not there, never there. I cannot stand another hour of it."

"The beautiful Deverish must be something of a vixen," I reflected, seeing the expression in the girl's face.



"CLUTCHING HER ROUND THE THROAT"

Andrew was helping her to her feet. "Don't be afraid," he said quietly, "I will see that you do not go back."

She looked into his face. "What is it?" she whispered, with white lips. "Do you know?"

"Yes, I know," he answered, meeting her look.

I had an inspiration. Among my clientèle I numbered several trained nurses. I called in at the post-office on my way home and wired for one. In less than two hours she was with me. I despatched her to the Manor. "Say

you have been sent from Heaven or Buckingham Palace, or any other probable and impressive source, and keep your eyes and ears open," I enjoined her, with that utter disregard for truth and scrupulousness which I have found the greatest of all aids to me in my researches.

She returned in an hour. There was anger in her eyes. The gauze veil streaming from her bonnet fluttered manelike to the offended toss of her head.

"You did not stay long," I said.

"My lord," she returned, "I did not have the opportunity. Lady Devilish—I believe you called her Devilish—just came into the room and gave a little cry, and turned her back on me as if I'd been an ogre. 'O, you would never suit,' she said, 'I must have someone young'—my lord, I am twenty-six—'and plump'—I weigh ten stone—'and healthy'—I have never had a day's illness. 'Send someone young, and plump, and healthy,' and she marched out."

"I suppose that would not be difficult?" I commented.

"Not at all," she said, resolutely; "a little padding, a touch of rouge, and some minor details are all that are needed."

"You mean to go yourself, then?"

"Yes, I mean to go," she returned. "If there is anything to find out she

may be sorry she wasn't more civil," she added, meditatively.

"Would she not recognise you?" I persisted.

I admire grit. I admired the uncompromising and superior disdain with which she met my question. She turned and left me without condescending a word. In fifteen minutes she came back, or, rather, somebody did whose voice was all I recognised. Her disguise was perfect. Before, she had certainly looked neither youthful (despite her assurance as to twenty-six), nor plump (despite her boasted *avoirdupois*), nor healthy. Now she was plump, and young, and rosy. She had been dark; now a profusion of rich red hair rippled off her brows. I wondered why she did not always go about disguised. She explained.

"In most houses, my lord," she said, "there are sons, and brothers, and husbands. A woman who has her living to get by nursing can only afford to sport cherry cheeks under exceptional circumstances."

When she had gone I dipped my pen in coloured ink and entered her name in my diary. Whether or not she succeeded with Lady "Devilish," she was a capable person. And capable persons are red-letter persons in a world where incompetency rules seven days out of most weeks.

## CHAPTER II.

### NURSE MARIAN'S STORY.

SHE received me with open arms. "You're just what I want," she said effusively. "I loathe sickliness. There was a gaunt, haggard creature here an hour ago. Ugh!" she shuddered, "I would not have employed her for worlds."

I may be prejudiced, but after her first remark I confess to feeling somewhat antipathetic to her ladyship. She has a curious way of staring. I suspect her of being short-sighted and shirking glasses for fear of detracting from her looks. Certainly I have never seen anyone so brilliantly beautiful.

Upstairs I was introduced to her companion, a Mrs. Lyall. She did not strike me as being altogether sane. She has rather a grim smile.

"You'll soon lose those fine cheeks," she said the moment she saw me.

"I trust not," I returned, with some amount of confidence. I had only just

opened a new packet. "Is Lady Devilish rather a trying patient, then?" I asked.

She broke into a laugh. "What did you call her?"

"I understood her name to be Devilish," I said.

"No, it's her nature," she retorted, looking furtively about. "Her name has an 'r' instead of an 'l.'"

Her ladyship was plainly no favourite of Mrs. Lyall's. Indeed, everybody in the house seemed to be in mortal terror of her. The servants would not, if they could help it, enter a room where she was.

From the unhealthy faces of the household I came to the conclusion that the house was thoroughly unsanitary. I determined to investigate the drains. Whatsoever there might be that was unwholesome it did not affect the mistress. Her energy was marvellous. She never tired. When, after a long



"I WILL NEVER LET YOU GO"



day picnicking or a late ball everybody looked as white as paper, she was as fresh and blooming and gay-spirited as possible. It seemed a mere farce for her to employ a nurse. But she had a fad about massage, and insisted on being "massed" morning and night.

"You don't look tired," she remarked, in a puzzled way, at the end of my first night's operations. She was staring curiously at my rouged cheeks. Strangely enough I was feeling actually faint. Strong-nerved as I am, I fairly reeled.

"Whatsoever I look," I answered her, a little irritably, "I certainly feel more tired than I ever remember feeling."

I thought she seemed pleased. Certainly I had said nothing to please her. No doubt she was thinking her own thoughts.

Her engagement to be married again was announced the day after my arrival. She had been already married twice. The young man—the Earl of Arlington—was, with a number of other persons, stopping in the house. He was a handsome, pleasant-looking man. I was told he had thrown over a girl he had cared for and who had cared for him for years in order to propose to Lady Deverish. He did not look capable of it. But, to all appearance, he was head over ears in love. He could not keep his eyes off her. He sat like a man bewitched, and neither ate nor rested.

"Poor young gentleman! He'll go the way of the others," Mrs. Plimmer, the housekeeper, confided to me.

"You don't suspect Lady Deverish of poisoning her husbands?" I returned.

"It isn't my place to suspect my betters, nurse," she said with dignity. "All I say is that there's something terrible mysterious. Why does everybody who comes to the Manor fail in health?"

"Drains," I suggested.

She tossed her ample chin. "Why did her two young husbands, as likely men as might be, sicken from the day she married them, and die consumptive? Was that drains, can you tell me?"

I thought it might have been, but having no evidence, did not commit myself.

Mrs. Plimmer tossed her ample chin again, this time triumphantly. "And why," she proceeded, "did Dr. Andrew, as kind a gentleman as walks, try to strangle her?"

I braved her scorn and ventured "jealousy."

She eyed me witheringly. "The doctor's no lady's man," she said, "and, besides, if he was, it's no reason for strangling them."

I was unable to find any fault with the drains. I began to grow interested. I myself felt strangely out of sorts—a new experience for me.

Lord Arlington's infatuation amounted to possession. He sat staring at her in a kind of ecstasy of fascination. He was pale and moody and obviously unhappy. I was told he had lost health and spirits markedly since his engagement. Probably his conscience troubled him about the other woman. At breakfast one morning he unwrapped a little packet that had come by post for him, without, it is to be supposed, observing the handwriting. As he undid it mechanically there dropped from the wrappings a ring, a knot of ribbon and a bundle of letters. He seemed like one stunned. Without a word he gathered them together and left the room. I met him later pacing the garden like a madman.

Poor man! His love-affair was short-lived.

A week later I was involuntary witness to a curious scene. I was sitting late one evening in the garden. Lady Deverish would not need me until bedtime, when her massage was due. Suddenly he and she, talking excitedly, came round the shrubbery.

"I have been mad," he exclaimed, in a hoarse, passionate voice. "For God's sake let me go free. They say her heart is broken."

She put her two hands on his shoulders, and lifted her face to his.

"I will never let you go," she said, with a curious ring as of metal in her voice. She wound her arms about his neck and kissed his throat. "And you love me too much," she added.

"Heaven only knows if it is love," he answered, "it seems to me like madness. I had loved her faithfully for years."

"And now you love me, and there is no way out of it," she whispered. She leaned up again and kissed him. Then with a little cooing laugh she left him.

He remained looking after her. "Yes, there is one way out of it," I heard him say slowly.

That night he shot himself.

Now, although I had known her but a fortnight, I had known her long enough to believe her superior to the weakness of being very deeply in love. Yet the night he died I was inclined to alter my opinion. He had bidden her a hasty good-bye, saying he was summoned to town. He took the last train up.

During the night I was called to her. I found her sitting up in bed, her face ashen pale, her eyes distended, her hands clasped to her head. She was gasping hysterically for breath. She seemed like one stricken: her features were picked out by deep, grey lines. She did not speak, but pointed with an insistent finger to her right temple. I put my hand upon it. Then I called quickly for a light; for my fingers slipped along that which seemed to be a moist and clammy aperture, moist with a horrible, unmistakable clamminess. But when the light was brought there was neither blood nor aperture, only a curious, blanched, irregular spot, that was chill to the touch.

I gave her brandy, and put hot bottles in her bed. She was shaking like one with ague. She clutched my hands, holding them against that ice-spot in her temple till I was sick and faint with the constrained position. Soon she seemed better. Some colour returned to her.

"My God, he is dead!" she said, through chattering teeth. Then she crouched down in the bed in a shuddering heap.

Next morning the news came. In that same hour he had put a bullet through his right temple. She was ill all that day, nerveless, and almost pulse-

less. She looked ten years older. I never saw so singular a change in anybody. I sent for Dr. Byrne, who attributed it to the shock of bad news. Why it developed some hours before the news arrived he did not explain. He only said: "Tut, tut, nurse, life is full of coincidences," and prescribed ammonia.

Next day she was better, and suggested getting up, but changed her mind



"GIVE ME SOME OF IT"

after having seen a mirror. "Gracious!" she said, with a shudder, "I look like an old woman." She broke into feeble weeping. "He ought to have thought of me," she cried, angrily.

She demanded wine and meat-juices, taking them with a curious solicitude, and carefully looking into her mirror for their effect. But she saw little there to comfort her.

"Do you think it might be my death-

blow?" she questioned me once through quivering lips. I shook my head. "Ah, you don't know all," she muttered.

In the afternoon she asked in a strange voice that the gardener's child should be brought to her. He was a chubby, rosy little fellow, whom everybody petted. "I must have something to liven me," she said. I had never supposed her fond of children. But she held her arms hungrily for him, and strained him to her breast. Her spirits rose. Her eyes brightened: she got colour. Soon she was laughing and chatting in her accustomed manner. The child had fallen asleep, but she would not part with him. When at last she let him go, I was horrified to find him cold and pallid. He was breathing heavily, and quite unconscious. I concluded the poor little chap was sickening for something. Later, I was surprised to receive a note from Dr. Andrew, whom I did not know. I dismissed him as I had done Mrs. Lyall, and probably Mrs. Plimmer, as not altogether sane. "I have been called in to attend Willy Daniels," the note ran. "For Heaven's sake do not let her get hold of any more children."

Next day she was better. She seemed to have forgotten Arlington and talked only of her health. She asked again for the boy. I told her he was ill. She broke into a curious laugh that seemed uncalled for. "Thank goodness, I haven't lost my power," she said a minute later. But she did not explain the saying.

She was in high spirits all the morning, talking and singing and trying on new laces and bonnets. She still complained of pain in the right temple. After her massage she turned peevish, protesting that it did her no good. "If you hadn't such a colour I should not believe you healthy," she said, crossly.

She had the parson's children in to tea. It would amuse her, she said, to see them eat their strawberries. They seemed afraid of her, and stood eyeing her from a distance. When she attempted to take the little one, it clung to me and shrieked with terror. But she persisted, and it soon fell asleep in her arms. When presently I took it from her, I found it chilled and breathing stertorously and quite unconscious. I thought of Dr. Andrew's injunction. Heavens! what had she done? Was she a secret poisoner? I dismissed the notion forth-

with. I had not left the room a moment during the time the child was with her, nor had it taken anything to eat or to drink.

"What is the matter with it?" I demanded.

Her eye avoided mine. She answered nonchalantly: "What does one expect? Children are everlastingly teething or over-feeding or having measles."

Next morning I was called up at day-break. Dr. Andrew was waiting to see me. I threw on my things and went down. He was stalking up and down the drawing-room. He stared at me.

"You seem to have resisted her," he muttered, looking at my cheeks. I have a long memory, and had not forgotten my rouge. He told me a wild and incredible story. He wound up by handing me a small bottle.

"Give her that dose so soon as she wakes," he said. The man was probably a better doctor than he was an actor. His manner paraded the nature of the dose. I took out the cork and smelt it. It was as I suspected. I walked across the room and emptied its contents out of the window. "Pardon me," I said, "but you are exceeding your duty."

"Is she to be allowed to go on murdering people?" he protested. "Do you know I have been up all night with that unfortunate baby? Do you know that Willy Daniels is not yet out of danger. Good Heavens! if I am willing to take the consequences how can anyone who knows the circumstances hesitate?"

"I have a safer and more justifiable plan," I said. "If what you say is true, the remedy is simple and poison is uncalled for. After all, Dr. Andrew, your story would sound lame enough in a law-court. By my plan you run no risks."

I laid it before him. He seemed interested. But he would not, after the manner of men in their dealings with women, permit me to take too much credit to myself.

"It might work," he said lukewarmly, "and as you say it would certainly be safer."

I went to my room and opened a further packet of rouge. I applied it lavishly. I began to see that the health tint on my cheeks had an important bearing on the situation. I put vermillion on my lips. Then I carried my patient her breakfast.

She seemed restored and lay in her

rose-pink bed, a smiling Venus. She fairly glowed with beautiful health. I thought of that poor little sick-bed. "Goodness!" I said with a start, "how ill you look!" She ceased from smiling.

I went and stood beside her. "Compare yourself with me."

She was pale enough indeed by the time she had done so. "Am I losing my power after all?" she muttered.



"FELL HEADLONG ACROSS HER BED"

She leapt across the floor, her draperies clinging round her pink flushed toes. She fled to the glass and drew the curtain aside. She turned on me peevishly. "Why did you tell me?" she protested. "I should have thought I looked well."

"Heavens! Shall I grow old like other people?"

Suddenly she flung herself upon me. She pressed her lips and cheeks against my throat and face.

"Give *me* some of it," she cried, ravenously. "You have so much vitality."



Let me drain some of that rich health and colour."

I nearly fell. It seemed as if she were actually sucking out my life. I reeled and sickened. Then with a tremendous effort I pushed her away and stumbled from the room. Was Andrew's story indeed true? Was she a monster or merely a monomaniac?

Years ago he had said she was dying of consumption. So far as physical signs could be trusted she had not a week to live. Suddenly she began to recover. She made flesh rapidly, gained health, and came back to life from the very jaws of death. Meanwhile, her sister, a sturdy school-girl, whom she insisted on having always with her, sickened and died.

Then a brother died, then her mother. By this time she had grown quite strong. Since then she had lived on the vital forces of those surrounding her. "The law of life," he said, "makes creatures interdependent. Physical vitality is subject to physical laws of diffusion and equalisation. One person below par absorbs the nerve and life sources of healthier persons with them. Many old, debilitated subjects live on the animal forces of the cat they keep persistently in their chair, and die when it dies. Wives and husbands, sisters and brothers, friends and acquaintances: there is a constant interchange of vital force.

Lady Deverish has to my knowledge been the actual cause of death of a dozen persons. Besides these she has drained the health of everybody associated with her. And in her case—a rare and extreme one—the faculty is conscious and voluntary. She was living on Arlington. The man was powerless. She paralysed his will, his mind, his energies. She robbed him of strength to resist her. The sequel is interesting, psychologically. She being for the time charged with his vitality, his sudden death, by some curious sympathy, affected her in the way you have described. She was all at once and violently bereft of the source whence she was drawing energy. But she will soon, if she be allowed, find some other to prey on. For some years I have studied her closely. She is the arch-type of a class of persons I have had under observation. I find such power depends largely on force of will and concentration. If she can maintain these there is no reason why she should not live to a hundred. There will always be persons of less assertive selfishness to serve as reservoirs of vital strength to her. At present her confidence is shaken, her power—therefore her life trembles in the balance. In the interests of humanity and justice she must not be allowed to regain her confidence. She lives by wholesale murder."

### CHAPTER III.

I DRANK a glass of port and went back to my patient. She lay panting on her bed.

"Fie!" I said; "that was a bit of hysteria. Come, now, take your breakfast."

She looked me in the face. A terror of death stood in beads on her skin. "I have heard of transfusion," she said faintly; "if you will let me have some of the rich red blood run out of your veins into mine I will settle £500 a year on you."

I shook my head.

"A thousand," she said. "Fifteen hundred."

"I should be cheating you," I said, "even were I willing. The operation has never been really successful."

She broke into raving and tears.

"I cannot die," she said; "I love life.

I love being beautiful and rich; I love admiration. I must have admiration! I love my beautiful, beautiful body and the joy of life! I cannot, cannot die!"

"What nonsense," I said. "You are not going to die."

"If I could only get it," she raved, "I would drink blood out of living bodies rather than I would die."

An hour later she summoned the housekeeper. She had been cogitating deeply with a fold between her brows; her sharp teeth set like pearls in the red of her lower lip.

"Plimmer," she said, "give all the servants a month's wages and an hour's notice to quit. I cannot endure their sickly faces. Get in a staff of decent healthy people. These cadaverous wretches are killing me."

Plimmer left the room without a word.

At the door she cast one look toward me and threw her hands up, as one who says: "The Lord have mercy on us!"

I followed, and bade her stay her hand. Whether Andrew's theories were true, or whether my lady were but a person with a mania, there was no doubt but that her convictions played an important part in her case.

I threw on my things and expended a half-sovereign at the chemist's. I came back the possessor of sundry packets. These I distributed among the household with explicit directions. Her ladyship was not well; her whim must be humoured.

It is surprising what a little rouge will do. In a few minutes the servants' hall was a scene Arcadian. Even the elderly butler reverted to blooming youth. Then I said to her cheerfully:

"You are making a mistake about the servants. For my part I am struck with their healthy looks."

"Since I have been ill?" she faltered.

She lay quiet, breathing hard through her dilated nostrils. "Send some of them in," she said presently.

By the time they had gone she was as white as paper. "Good Heavens!" I heard her mutter, "I have lost my power. I am a dead woman."

Then she flung out her arms and wept. "Get me healthy children," she cried; "I must have health about me."

Dr. Byrne, who was attending her, assented in all innocence. "Why, of course," he said; "it will be cheerful for you. Get in some cherry-cheeked children to amuse her ladyship, nurse."

I nodded—in token that I was not deaf, and not at all in acquiescence. Food and wine I supplied abundantly, but neither children nor adults. I isolated her *in toto*. I allowed her maids only to come near her long enough to dust and arrange her room. I have seen her fix them with a basilisk stare, straining her will. She had undoubtedly some baleful hypnotic power that set them trembling and stumbling about in curious, aimless fashion. They would seem drawn as by some spell, to stand motionless and dazed beside her bed. Then I would turn them face about, and parading their roseate tints, scold them for idleness and dismiss them. She would stare after them in a despair that, under other circumstances, would have been pitiful. The sense that her power was gone

robbed her actually of power. She raved and cursed her self-murdered lover for involving her in his death.

Whether Dr. Andrew and I were justified in that we did I sometimes wonder now. Then I had no room for doubt. In face of the horrible facts it did not occur to me to question it. If that she believed were true, we were assuredly justified; if not, that we did could not affect results.

Andrew's theory of those results is that she had lived so long on human energy that food in the crude state stood her in little stead. Certainly, though she was fed unremittingly on the choicest and most nourishing of diets, she was an aged and haggard woman in a week. Nobody would have recognised her. She shrivelled and shrank like one cholera-stricken. One day her dog stole into the room. She put out her hand and clutched it voraciously. I took it an hour later from her. It was dead and stiff.

How I myself, and a nurse I had called in to help me, kept life in us I cannot say. I had been an abstainer. Now I drank wine like water. All round her bed was an atmosphere as of a vault, though outside it was sunny June.

She raged like one possessed. "You are murdering, murdering me," she cried unceasingly.

Dr. Byrne thought her mind wandering. I knew it centred with a monstrous, selfish sanity. He sent for one of the first London consultants. After a lengthy investigation the great man pronounced her suffering from some obscure nervous disease. "Nothing to be done," he said. "I give her three days: most interesting case. Hope you will succeed in getting a *post-mortem*."

Once she fixed me with her baleful eyes, how baleful was seen now that their fine lustre and the bloom that had been beneath them were gone.

"I have had ten years more of life and pleasure than my due," she chuckled in her shrivelled throat—the throat now of an old, old woman.

Then she broke into dry-eyed crying. "I thought I could have lived another ten." She begged once for a mirror. I thank Heaven that with all my heat of indignation against her, I was not guilty of that cruelty.

Dr. Andrew called daily for my bulletin. Everything that science afforded in

the way of concentrated and digestible food and stimulant, he religiously got down from London.

"We must give her every chance," he said, "every justifiable chance, that is."

After a few days I was again single-handed. My nurse-colleague succumbed. I felt my powers failing. I could scarcely drag about. I prayed Heaven for strength to last so long as she should. Even in the moment of dissolution, such was her frenzied greed of life, I believed should some non-resistant person take my place, she would struggle back to health.

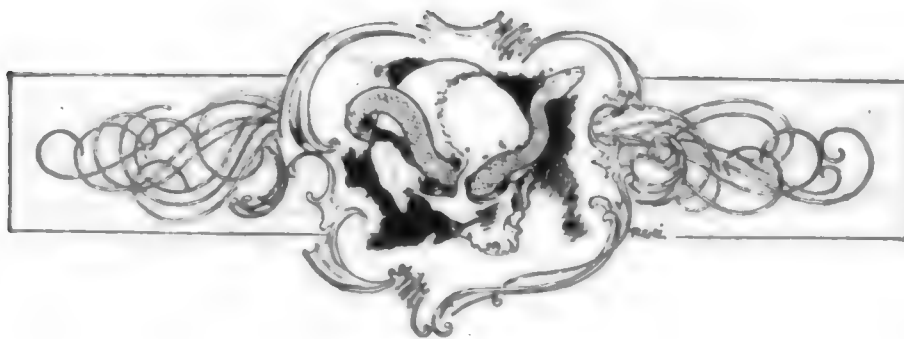
Once when I arranged her pillows, she seized my hand, and before I could withdraw it she had carried it to her teeth and bitten into it. I felt her suck the blood voraciously. She cried out and struck at me as I wrenched it away.

She died in the third week of her isolation. I saw the death change come into her shrivelled face. Then in the moment that life left her she made one supremest effort.

It seemed as though my heart stopped. My head sank on my chest, my hands dropped at my side. Then I swayed

and fell headlong across her bed. They found me later lying on her corpse. I am convinced that had she been a moment earlier, had she nerved her powers the instant before, rather than on the instant life was leaving her, she would be alive to this day, and I—— Well, as it was I did not leave my bed for a month."

"If I were to write that story in the *Lancet*," Dr. Andrew said, "I should be the laughing-stock of the profession. Yet it is the very key-note of human health and human disease, this interchange of vital force that goes on continually between individuals. Such rapacity and greed as the Deverish's is fortunately rare, but there are a score of such vampires in this very town, vampires in lesser degree. When A. talks with me ten minutes I feel ten years older. It takes me an hour to bring my nerve-power up to par again. People call him a bore. In reality he is a rapacious egotist hungrily absorbing the force of anyone with whom he comes into relation—in other words a human vampire."



# *Some Experiences of Lord Syfret.*

BY ARABELLA KENEALY.

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## *HONORIA'S HERO.*

ILLUSTRATED BY R. SAVAGE.

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### CHAPTER I.

“**W**HO is that, Sergeant?”

To address a policeman as sergeant is the road royal to his heart, but to-day the password failed. He was gazing stupidly, and with an abashed countenance, after a thin little man who had returned his obsequious salutation with a cold stare. He remained looking after this uncivil person till he had passed from sight. Then he stooped and flicked a speck of dust from the knee of his uniform with an overdone indifference.

“That’s McFerret, of Scotland Yard, our boss-detective, your lordship.”

“You don’t seem to be a favourite of his.”

“I forgot my dooty, your lordship, and he’s not the one to forget I forgot it. My dooty was not to reco’nise ‘im.”

“Ah,” I said. “He’s after somebody, I suppose?”

Policeman R. looked knowing. Then he resumed his depressed air.

“I igspec I sh’ll never ‘ear the end o’ it,” he said dejectedly. “I did it once before and it put me back a year.”

I slipped five shillings into his ready palm. “Anything up?” I questioned.

“Must be, your lordship, or he wouldn’t be here. But, bless you, he don’t tell me. He’s as deep as a reservoy. Look out, he’s coming back.”

The thin little man was returning at a great pace. Something had happened it was plain. There was triumphant excitement in every nervous line of him. Policeman R. simulated unacquaintance to such purpose that half a mile away you would have supposed the man approaching to be his principal creditor.

The thin man passed in the road without turning his head. As he passed he threw these words out sideways:

“Notice young woman walking with young man.”

Three minutes later a couple sauntered into sight. My eye was on the man, so that I did not recognise his companion till they were abreast of us. He was a well-built, gentleman-like fellow, with a face that would have been handsome had his brow and jaw accorded better. As it was, the disproportion between brain-stuff and brute-stuff jarred me with a sense of insecurity. That jaw of his was capable of taking the brain between its teeth and bolting in a manner that argued ill to such as stood in its way. For the rest he was broad-shouldered, erect, and carried himself well in his tweeds.

Then my eyes went to his companion. I had only time to raise my hat. She did not notice my salute. She did not see me at all. Her pale face was lifted to the well-cut profile of the man beside her. There were tears on her lashes and love in her eyes. There was something more. I am a bachelor, and I trust by the good offices of Fate to die in that state. But I am a man, and I know what that look means in a woman’s face. I know it means, God help her if the conventions of the world have not been satisfied.

As they passed he flashed from under his narrow brows one keen, dare-devil glance in our direction. His voice was lowered: he seemed to be re-assuring her. She had no eyes nor ears for anything but him. It seemed to me she did not listen to his words, but only heard his voice. Twice I saw her carry a trembling hand to her lips, and lay it secretly and with a tender fondness on his shoulder.

I had known her from childhood. I put myself between her and the con-



stable's stare. But the more delicate issues of the case had quite escaped him. His face was one broad grin. He chuckled and slapped his thigh.

"Danged if I ain't got back at him," he blustered. "The best joak out. He doan't make mistakes hisself, doan't my fine gentleman?"

I let him talk. I had other things to think of. Presently McFerret reappeared.

"Well?" he questioned.

"Well, sir," the constable returned, with an intonation of civility that the superior criticism of his eye belied.

"Do you know her?"

"Who?"

"Who! Why, the woman with him. The woman who just passed."

The constable looked important.

"Beggin' your pardon, sir," he rejoined, "I ain't seen any woman pass, though I might ha' seen a lady."

"Lady!" the other echoed. "I guess ladies don't go about with Ted Squance."

"Thet Ted Squance?" Constable R. interrogated. "Well, now you come to tell me it. I shouldn't ha' thought it."

The thin man lost his temper.

"Why the deuce don't you answer my question?"

"Beg pardon, sir," the other said. "I was that took aback becos' I knows both the lady and the gent, and I think——"

"Keep your reflections to yourself, and tell me her name."

"Well, her name's Miss 'Onnery Deans, and she's old Squire Deans's granddaughter; and the gent's a gent as stops at the Court a good bit, which ain't surprisin' seein' he's the Squire's grand-nephew," the constable announced, hammering his information into his superior with the indiscreet alacrity of the common fool driving nails into his coffin.

McFerret levelled at him one look which was an epitaph. Then he took a "D" between his teeth and strode off down the road with the air of a man somewhat late for his train.

"What was the object of that lie?" I asked. "You know the squire has no grand-nephew."

The constable slapped his thigh.

"Begging your lordship's pardon," he explained. "I giv' him as good as he's wuth. P'raps he'll be civiler another time."

But the policy of rapping at one's superiors in office does not pay. The following week a new constable stood at the corner, in the old one's shoes. The old constable had passed from the ranks of the intelligent force. To this day he may be hired as a hewer of wood or a hoer of potatoes.

## CHAPTER II.

I HAD known Squire Deans, if anybody might be said to know him, all my life. He was, I imagine, somewhere to be found inside the crustacean accretion of lore and learning he had deposited about him like a shell, but I must confess I never came across a man who had succeeded in penetrating his most exterior cuticle. Like a tortoise he would sometimes steal a clumsy head out, or advance an extremity, and, as you would do with a tortoise, so with him, you had to take such evidence as proof that the shell contained an entity with a nervous and circulatory system.

Deans Court was a structure rambling and immense, dating from the Seventeenth Century. The original building had been so greatly and so incongruously extended, that it gave you the impression of a strange amphibious monster with more limbs than it required. Moreover, it was tunnelled with subterranean

passages wherein, at certain seasons, the wind howled like a dog scenting death. There were secret panellings and sliding walls, and every possible device for such games of hide-and-seek as were played when the seeker carried naked, and it might be dripping, sword in hand, and the hider his life. The oaken floors were dyed in parts with the life-stain that is said not to wash out. - Footsteps, booted and spurred, rang over them boldly, and in broad daylight. Silken garments rustled shyly, or fled shivering down the passages. And, doubtless, headless persons walked, for no ghost story that ever has been told of haunted house was not accredited to this one.

The squire was the only person who had never seen or heard anything out of the common, but you would not expect that anything out of the common would trouble to knock long enough upon his horny crust to make itself perceived.

Honoraria Deans had never been to boarding-school, for which, from one standpoint, she had something to be thankful. Boarding-schools are human mills whence girls are turned out commonplace and "by the gross"—as toys are "made in Germany."

Her grandfather did not approve of education for girls. He regarded it as waste of good material. He did not, as a matter of fact, approve of girls at all;

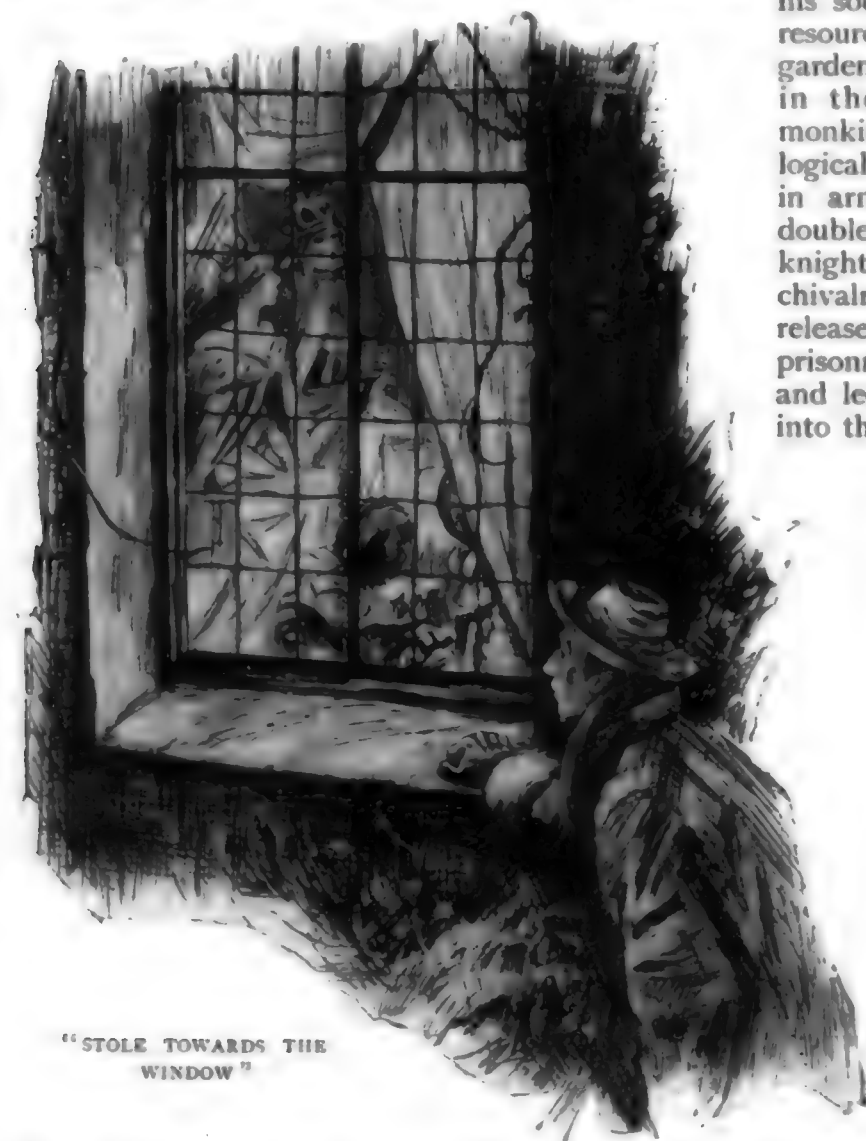
Whatsoever she wanted it was not in the theological section. So Honoraria had the library, and she had the garden. The one served her for school-house, the other for play-ground. She had absolutely no companions, young or old.

"Honoraria has me," the crustacean had always said, "it is not as if she were alone in the house."

But I do not think Honoraria made great demands upon the crustacean for

his society. She had other resources. She peopled the garden with persons she met in the library; not the monkish fellows of the theological section, but persons in armour and helmet, in doublet and hose, heroes, and knights and ladies, saints and chivalrous sinners. These she released from the barred imprisonment of printed pages and led them gentle-handed into the sunlight and breeze of the old, wild garden. I have seen her walk and talk there with them; her face aglow, her footstep light and buoyant keeping pace with their fantastic gait, her eyes drinking glimpses, her ears whisperings, of their phantasmal company.

Her grandfather was in some ways right. She was more in her element with these persons of print than she would have been in the society of school-misses infected with



"STOLE TOWARDS THE WINDOW"

indeed, his mind was ever in a twilight of astonishment as to why woman had been created. With means so multiple, resources so fertile at her command, it appeared to him quite simple for Nature to have devised some other expedient whereby a race, masculine and competent, should be perpetuated. "Honoraria has the library," he would say with regard to his granddaughter's education, "so long as she does not meddle with my theological section. What more can she want?"

a scarlet fever of fine clothes, a measles of self-consciousness, shooting languishing affected glances after the chemist's assistant or music-master—who happened at the moment to be the vulgar idol of the school. If any of Honoraria's knights or heroes kissed her on her flushing cheek, or brushed her fingers with aerial hands, what harm was in it? He was a man who had been dead some hundred years, or a man sprung from the finer elements of a romancist's brain, or a man she had fashioned out of the

innocent materials of her own heart. In fine, he was a man for the anatomist to scoff at: a man without any of the dross that serves to keep a head out of the skies, and concerns itself with street-paving, and the disposal of the civic mud; a man with bone and muscle only for the loftiest deeds; a man who would be always running against the telegraph wires seeking unchivalrous giants whom he might devour, a man of such unequal parts that were you to stand him up against a wall he would assuredly pitch over lop-sided, ill-balanced, top-heavy with super-excellence and virtue. Yet, not a man too great to see how fair a girl may look when the winds of a wayward morning or the dreams of a winter night have kindled her eyes and flushed her cheeks. O! I pray you not too great a man for that! Nor one too bent on knightly deeds to miss perceiving how her last new frock became her. A man to go to the lions for his God, a man to war with dragons for his love, a man to lead a conquering army, a man to be Prime Minister or Czar, a man to pen great books, a man altogether too square for this round world of ours, but not a man to harm a girl though she admitted him to her most intimate society, and in her tenderest moods. Honoria's lovers, doubtless, rang the changes, down the ages from King Arthur to Carlyle. They were altogether a gay chameleon, changing their colour according to the page on which they happened to be found. So I had learned from sundry little talks and walks I shared with her when she had grown too old to be ridden on a knee, and later, too young to be kissed.

But now it appeared Honoria had got a lover in the flesh, and—if that face of hers told truth—had, Heaven help her, thought him good enough and top-heavy like that man of her imagining to be admitted to her loneliest moods.

I jumped the fence one noon and met her as she turned the path. Heaven help her, indeed, poor child! There was more now than her face to betray her. She walked slowly and with lids drooped low on a pale cheek. Her cloak had blown aside, and her simplicity took no heed to fold it to its place again. It was December, and the snow lay crisp. She did not hear me come. Till, suddenly, she raised her eyes. Now, thanks be to innocence, the man had failed to harm her! However much a ruffian

he might be, he had not harmed her. Between him and his kisses there had ever come the knight who had been dead some hundred years, the hero who had braved the lions, the warrior, the poet, the Prime Minister, the top-heavy, lop-sided, impracticable creature of her innocent imaginings. The man had brought shame on her in the world's sight. In her own there was none—only wonder and a girl's awe of a tender human mystery—a mystery that had been told with all the baseness blotted out by that shadowy hero of hers.

I noticed that she wore a wedding-ring. Of course! Honoria's sensitive pride would not have satisfied itself with anything less. I pictured such a marriage ceremony as might have taken place in the ruined chapel of the court, the wind moaning, as it had a way of doing, melancholy dirges through the broken organ tubes, the dim light lying on the faded banners, marble persons folding marble hands in everlasting prayer, saints and martyrs richly apparelled crowding the windows and emblazoning the light, an owl or two blinking wide-lidded in the dusty chancel, the mice lying close in their holes, while Honoria stood rapt and reverent looking with blind and tender eyes into a low-browed, strong-jawed face, and seeing in it only the familiar trusted features of her hero.

Doubtless the man had been priest as well as bridegroom. Possibly he had read the commination or baptismal service. I was sure it had been all the same to Honoria, whose rapt ears heard but the celestial music of a heaven-made union. Before I had time to speak to her, Honoria broke suddenly into tears.

"Why, Honoria!" I said.

She stopped in her walk and, faced me. She put her two hands on my shoulders. I could see how thin her face was, how drawn about the mouth. But there was light in her eyes.

"Uncle Syfret," she said, tremulously (I was no uncle of hers, but it pleased her so to style me), "there are things wonderful, terrible things going to happen. O, if I might only tell you."

"Are you going to have a new frock, Ria, or a season in town?" I asked.

She shook her head.

"O, I am a child no longer," she said. "You forget I was seventeen last month."

"And when may these wonders be expected to take place?" I questioned. "And why terrible? Is anybody to be hurt?"

Her mouth quivered at the corners.

"You see it cannot be helped," she said, "some must be killed—not more than are absolutely necessary. Because, in the end, it is to be so much better for the others."

"I suppose you are talking of the rooks? Has the Squire consented, at last, to have them thinned?"

"The rooks?" she echoed. She turned astonished eyes to me. "Have you not heard? Has the secret been so well kept?"

"So well kept that I had not a notion it existed. Yet I was with your grandfather yesterday."

"O, he knows nothing," she answered, with an undutiful scorn. "He does not even know the Queen is a usurper."

"Well, as you put it like that, Honoria, I confess I was suffering under the same delusion. Into what revolutionary treatise have you been dipping?"

She suddenly wrung her hands.

"O, what a work it will be," she cried, distressed. "When even you, who know so much, believe her a lawful queen."

Seeing her take it so to heart, I expressed myself open to conviction. I had always been led to regard the succession as indisputable, but I was not a man of stubborn prejudices.

She shook her head.

"No, I have said enough," she insisted. Nevertheless, she held a finger up and whispered oracularly, "Wait until Christmas eve, uncle."

"I suppose I have no alternative," I answered. "But, tell me, Ria, are these wonderful and terrible things of such a nature that one should insure his life?"

"O, why will you laugh?" she cried, distressed, "when it is all so real."

I remembered a number of former distresses that had been so real, starting from the time when, at eight years old, I found her without shoes or stockings, and wearing little but a ragged petticoat, leaving home with her grandfather's walking-stick in hand, and a burden on her shivering shoulders, to find the Slough of Despond, Great-Heart, and the Little Wicket-Gate.

"I am not laughing, dear," I said. "You know I would serve you in any way. But, tell me, have you no trouble outside this which concerns itself with usurping queens?"

In a moment her attitude changed. She lifted a shining face; her eyes were lambent.

"No," she said, "beyond that there is nothing but a great joy."

She laid a hand wistfully on mine.

"Uncle Syfret," she said, shyly, "do you know I am ever so sorry for any man I like because God did not will that he should be a woman."

Poor Honoria! She was but seventeen.

### CHAPTER III.

FOR some months the ghosts at the Court had been lively. It would appear they were holding high revel. Quite late into the morning lights were seen burning in the windows; indeed, on more than one occasion they had been overtaken by the milkman, therein registering a sad anachronism. Footsteps were not only heard in the garden, but were traced there next morning, and apparitions which had not been known to put their heads outside the door for years were observed one midnight filing mysteriously out of the shrubbery. A gardener's boy had even overheard remarks let fall by an armoured gentleman he afterwards identified in the picture-gallery—a gentleman in breast-plate, full-bottomed wig, and lace cravat—remarks which were somewhat more

*fin-de-siècle* than befitted his period and dignity.

"Burn yer blooming soul," he was reported to have blustered, with a distinctness beyond dispute, "d'yer think I'd stir my bloomin' boots ef it wasn't for the tin?"

The sentiment I could not deny as one common to all ages, but the language wherein it was stated did not appeal to me as characteristic of a Seventeenth Century magnate. I dismissed the gardener's hopeful, therefore, as a person on whose word it would be insecure to build history, though there were some who staked their reputations on it. Servants began to leave, and that at a moment's notice. One young woman left in sore dudgeon, declaring that she kept company with a respectable grocer,





"AS ONLY A DEAD MAN LIES"

and she wasn't going to be kissed round corners—gentlemen or no gentlemen, ghosts or no ghosts—by wicked fellows, who ought to be laying like other decent corpses in their coffins." Everybody predicted that "something was about to happen," else why all this post-mortem activity. In former times the manifestations had been rare, and more or less retiring, now they showed a lively disposition to turn the living out of house and home.

I strolled out late one evening. If there were truly things to be seen—The snow made a sort of drab twilight of a moonless night. The Court, with its broad low façade and spread wings, lay like an eyeless creature, crouching in

the shelter of tall trees. Not a light was to be seen. Even the west wing, which stretched out from the main building and climbed a slope—the wing reputed to be the head-quarters of the trouble—was as dark and silent as the rest. I went in at the main gateway, and strolled in the direction of that western wing. As I went round its outer curve, I discovered that my first impression of desertion had been wrong. There was certainly a light burning; a curtain caught up at one corner of a window disclosed a triangular glare. I threw my cigar away. I took my shoes off—the thing had grown interesting. I stole in my stockinged feet towards the window.

Having looked in, it is possible I rubbed my eyes; one does in such cases. Certainly there was cause enough for rubbing eyes, for nobody would have expected to come upon a scene out of Madame Tussaud's, or a charade, at that hour of night in the house of a crustacean neighbour. Side by side on a raised dais sat two crowned figures, one male the other female, round them a group of courtiers, dressed in shining armour and rich stuffs. The crowned woman was of girlish figure, and her robe of ermine-bordered velvet fell over her young shoulders as though she shrank inside its pretentious dignity. Her face was turned away, but the light made a slender shadow of a girlish cheek. The man beside her was of heavy build. His crown, and a mass of curls falling just short of his shoulders, hid his features. All I could distinguish was the bend of an iron jaw. He held a staff in one hand, and from time to time pointed his remarks with it. The crowned woman kept her face turned toward him, the anxious outline of her cheek lifting itself to him in a wistful curve out of a veil of silver tissue. The courtiers stood in a circle on the lower plane of the floor, their profiles to me. The room was brilliantly lighted. The crowned man seemed to be speaking at length. Some uneasy impulse stirred in me to see the woman's face. I moved towards another window; my foot caught, I tripped headlong. As I fell, I thought

I heard the distant ripple of a bell. When I stood up again the scene had vanished. On the other side of the window was abysmal blackness. King, queen, and courtiers had passed like a flash of lightning; where there had been a brilliant illumination now there was no glimmer of light.

I waited for an hour with my eyes against the window-pane. I might have spared myself the trouble, not a sound nor sight was vouchsafed me. Then I put on my shoes and went home. Had I seen ghosts? Who were the crowned personages? who the courtiers?

A memory came back—I had scarcely noticed it at the time—but it came back with farcical insistence. One of the courtiers during the king's address had bent his head towards a neighbour, and jerked over his shoulder a thumb of derision in the direction of the velvet-robed girl. At the same time a plume of his jewelled cap had caught in a brooch on his fellow's shoulder. Immediately his curls were twisted awry; a momentary glimpse of a close-cropped crown put a new complexion on his features. In those days, possibly, there were cockney cut-throats; in those days, doubtless, men wore artificial love-locks. But it was a bit of realism that excited my suspicion. Who, then, was the girl? Something in the lifted outline of the cheek perturbed me. I determined to put the matter into other hands.

#### CHAPTER IV.

"If you please your lordship, I am sorry to disturb your lordship's breakfast, but the gentleman who dined with you last night has been found murdered at the Court."

I did not finish my second cutlet. In less time than that would have taken I had joined a knot of men who stood grouped about something lying in the snow before the western wing. The news was more true than most news. McEwan—a smart young fellow I had set upon the enigma of the Court—lay huddled in an area of trampled snow as only a dead man lies. It was a ghastly spectacle: he had been literally kicked to death. In one hand was the revolver I had given him the previous evening. Two of its charges had been fired, apparently to some pur-

pose, for some twenty feet from him the snow was disturbed again, and showed a patch and trail of blood. Somebody reported having heard shots fired during the night.

The squire was dragged from his study, whence he came sidling and reluctant. He could not see, he said, what use his presence served. The man was obviously dead; it was a case for the police. Meanwhile proofs of *Pantheistic Man* lay uncorrected in his study. He gave up the keys of the house with peevish eagerness. We might search the west wing certainly, and the east wing, and the main building. The whole place was free to us to come and go so long as we did not invade the library or meddle with his theological section.

The west wing showed suspicious signs of occupation. For years the door between it and the rest of the house had been locked and bolted, neither servants nor members of the family being known to enter it; yet the dust of the floors showed prints of heavy boots, such boots as those that had done poor McEwan to death; and the furniture was brushed bright in parts from recent use. The key of the door, but only I knew this, was in Honoria's possession. To all my questions she turned only a white, horror-stricken silence. "It had to be," she said, and "Wait until Christmas eve."

After much fruitless investigation, the crime was laid to the already heavy account of a local gang of poachers, and the police directed their energies accordingly. For a while the west wing lost its evil name, the lights and sounds had vanished.

One evening I received a note from Honoria. It was written in an agitated hand, and preferred a request. I should have regarded it as singular from any other than this girl. But anything in Honoria that was not singular, would have been singular in Honoria. She sent me a case of rings and her little pearl-set watch, and begged that I would lend her a few thousand pounds. Knowing Honoria, the request surprised me. The rings and watch at the most were not worth two hundred. I was acquainted with Honoria's jewel-case. It had been well if somewhat venerably stocked; and the fact that Honoria, poor child, had sent me so little security for my money was evidence enough that these slender possessions were all that remained to her. During this time I had done my utmost to obtain her confidence; but she kept her secret with all the fond tenacity of woman shielding man.

I answered her note in person. The facts looked serious. She was sitting in the little morning-room, her face buried in her hands. I was shocked indeed to see her, she was so white and wan. Poor Honoria! I wondered if she still wasted sympathy on men because they were not women.

"It is so kind of you," she said, starting up. "I knew you would not say no."

"Business with men is a serious matter," I answered, taking her hands; "and one needs some security for thousands of pounds, my dear."

She looked up helplessly into my face. "The watch and rings are not enough?"

"Well, you avaricious young person, you have plenty more. I will take, for example, your emerald necklet."

She turned her face away. Her hand trembled in mine.

"No," she faltered.

"No?" I repeated. "Your set of rubies and your amethyst and silver belt, then."

She shook her averted head.

"And what do you mean by a few thousand pounds, Ria. It is vague for a business transaction?"

"You could not spare more than four?" she questioned, searching my face.

"Four thousand pounds is a good deal of money. I must certainly have the emerald necklet and the diamond crescent."

"The one you gave me, godfather?"

"The same, godchild."

Her face lighted up.

"I have that," she cried; "I would not part with that." She hurried from the room. After some minutes she returned, with a bewildered look.

"I cannot find it anywhere," she said; "yet I know I must have it somewhere. I wore it last night."

"Why, where were you last night, Miss Cinderella?"

She hung her head.

"That is one of the things I may not tell you."

"Honoria," I insisted, "you must. I must know what you want this money for, and what you have done with your jewels."

She lifted her face; it was beautiful with light.

"Godfather," she said, "it is such a noble cause."

"It appears to be an expensive one, at any rate. You must tell me about it. Who is the man?"

The blood mounted to her eyes.

"Who told you?" she faltered.

Who told me! Did any person out of a nursery need telling.

"You wear a wedding-ring, my dear."

"Yes," she said, simply. "It is true, I am married."

I questioned her about him. She scarcely heard me: her mind was away.

"Godfather," she said, when I had done, "have you ever known a man who was as handsome as—as no other man ever was before, and as brave and as

true"—her voice broke—"and as tender as a woman, and full of noble aims, and generous and reverent, and yet could be gallant, and clever, and gay——"

Description failed her, she broke off suddenly, and stretched two wistful palms to something invisible to me.

"No, my dear," I answered, when her eyes came questioning to my face, "I have never known such a man."

"O, but there is one," she cried, "there is one."

"What," I queried, "the man who has your jewels?"

She looked at me, then cried out in laughter, that was more than one part tears:

"Why, godfather, did you think he took them for himself?"

"I thought so, Ria."

There were laughter and tenderness together in her eyes.

"O!" she whispered, "you do not know the man I mean."

I thought I should like to. I am not normally violent, but neither am I unintermittently normal.

"Ria," I insisted, "you must tell me what has been done with your jewels, and for what you want this money; if not, I must go to your grandfather."

"Not to-night?" she said, catching her breath.

"Not to-night, of course," I rejoined. "It is too late to-night."

She breathed more freely.

"You shall know before long," she said.

I could learn nothing more, and left her. It is needless to say I left her still without those thousands.

## CHAPTER V.

HAVING time on my hands and business with him, I drove to my lawyer. After business we got upon a bottle of

port, so that it was nearly midnight when I drove home by Dean's Court. As we turned the corner there was a crevice of light showing in a window of the western wing.

I pulled the check rein.

"I shall walk the rest of the way," I told the men. "By the bye, if I do not



"THEIR FACES LOOKED GREEN"

turn up in a couple of hours, come up, half-a-dozen of you, to the west wing of the Court."

In the moonlight their faces looked green. I believe for a moment it occurred to them to restrain me forcibly; but I plunged through the hedge and into the darkness.

It appeared that my curiosity was to be unrewarded, for the streak of light



admitted nothing more to my view than a portion of brilliantly illuminated ceiling.

I went cautiously—my mind on McEwan—the round of the windows. In the last a top pane was broken. I could hear though I could not see. At first there was merely a confused murmur to be made out, but by and bye it resolved itself into connected speech.

"If it please your Royal Highness," an obsequious voice said, "the latest despatches from France inform us of delay. Nothing can be done until her Royal Highness has handed over the money promised. In the event of her Royal Highness being unable to procure the sum stated in coin, it is known that there are valuable services of gold and silver plate, and various works of art in the strong-room of the Court, which would do equally well. Her Majesty has but to hand the keys to me, and all will be arranged."

There was dead silence, you might have heard a pin drop. Then a woman's voice broke out, distressed:

"Charles, dear, O! I can't do that. You know I can't do that."

There was a longer silence. Then a man said, gruffly, "It's our last chance. We can't do anything without the money, Ria."

Another pause, then a sobbing whisper:

"Charles, dear, you know I cannot do that. They are not mine."

"You hear what she says," the man pronounced sullenly.

A horrible, hoarse murmuring uprose. At the same time half-a-dozen fellows sprang heavily to their feet.

"Force her," was shouted. "Tommy rot." "How'd she like her throat cut, or be kicked?" "D' she think we're going to be done out of it?" "Curse 'er for a fool."

The strong voice rolled out:

"Silence there! Silence, or I swear I'll put a dozen bullets among you."

There was a terrified girlish cry.

"Silence you fools," the voice insisted, in a lower key.

At that moment I thanked Providence for the brute force of the jaws it issued from. "We'll pull round yet. The coin will pass in America." The tones rose again, and took on an unreal bombast: "The cause gains daily. We have but to strike one blow, and victory is ours."

He was greeted with hoarse laughter.

"O! blow the cause. This ain't any time for play-acting."

"Cussed if it is," another said; "there's been a dashed deal too much time wasted on it a'ready."

The protest was taken up. There was a sudden trampling of feet as of an uprising of violent men. In my eagerness to see I had nearly broken a window-pane. I thought timely of McEwan. Above the trampling and roar I heard the click of a revolver. There was silence again. Then the same voice said, in tones of suppressed rage:

"I swear before God I'll put a bullet through the next man who speaks."

The silence broke once more into murmuring, this time the murmur of subjection.

"Our further councils," the strong voice said, "will be best conducted without the presence of the queen."

The cry of a half-caught sob swept like the wailing of a harp across the murmuring.

The man's voice lowered: "Yes, you must go, Ria, I can manage them better by myself."

"Charles, Charles!" she pleaded.

"Room there for the queen," he shouted. "The queen leaves the council-chamber."

"O, no she don't!" a fellow said. I heard him take two steps across the floor; but he stopped short. I imagine he thought better of it. Again I thanked Providence for the iron in that jaw.

"Blest if she ain't agoin' to kiss 'im in front of us all," one chuckled brutally close up against the window.

"She's ony a puttin' 'er 'and on 'is arm to see he ain't made out o' air or sky, or a bit o' blooming 'eaven," another said, sardonically.

There was a rustle of garments, then a girl cried, falteringly:

"Friends! you would never harm your king?"

The obsequious voice that had first spoken replied, ironically:

"Madame, our king is as the apple of our eye."

A door closed—there was a moment's silence. Then the obsequious voice changed to an extremely bullying one.

"Now, then, Squance, chuck the Adelphi, and don't waste any more time. Perhaps you'll give us your kingly plans?"

"I will," the other answered, coolly. "It's every man for himself, and the

devil take the fool who's fool enough to be taken."

There was a rush of feet.

"Keep off," he cried. "If I fire it will bring the police. The place is thick with them—McFerret brought a trainful down to-night. As it is, you'll find it precious hard to get away."

"We've got that bit o' bizness to do first," was shouted, brutally. "Keys or no keys, we ain't agoin' before we've lifted every brass farthin's worth in the house."

"No, that I swear you shan't," Squance said; "I'll set the cops on you myself first."

There was a hoarse roar. Then he shouted, violently:

"Sykes, I'll shoot you like a dog if you lay hands on that door."

Immediately the place was pandemonium. There were scuffling and trampling of brutal feet. There was the dull sound of blow meeting blow. The air was thick with horrible cries, and more horrible curses. A sudden blackness where the triangular glare between the window-frame and curtain had been showed that the lights had gone out. Inside there was to be heard the hoarse muttering and gasping breath as of men tearing one another limb from limb. Then a blinding flash, and two pairs of hands grappled down upon my shoulders. Before I had time to turn I found myself in handcuffs.

"We're thirty strong, and you'd best come quiet, mate," a rough voice blurted in my ear.

## CHAPTER VI.

I STOOD in the snow for an hour, my hands linked together, a man with a bludgeon standing over me.

"You may be Lord Syfit, for all I cares," he said, uncivilly; "but you're along o' Gentleman Squance's gang o' coiners, and I guess you're in for fourteen year."

I was glad when my numbed limbs were presently trotted into the interior of the western wing. At a table, showing an exultant, if an unpleasant face, McFerret sat. Round him were officers and prisoners in various stages of dilapidation. On the floor great clots of blood and dust, overturned furniture and torn upholstery showed how violent a struggle there had been. In one corner a man lay dead.

As I entered by one door Honoria entered by another. Honoria in a trailing dressing-gown that showed her pitiful condition, her long hair falling disordered about her. Her face wore a curious stricken look—its blanched whiteness throwing up her terror-darkened eyes. A police-sergeant had her by the arm.

"Is this the woman?" asked McFerret.

A mean-faced ruffian started forward.

"That's 'er, yer worship," he whined.

"'Twas 'er gave us the key."

The officer in whose custody he was dragged at him savagely. Behind McFerret's back I was pleased to see him grip and shake the wretch. I marked his number—I mentally devoted half a sovereign to his service.

"Mr. McFerret," I began. My constable took me straightway by the collar, while McFerret shouted "Silence!" A second time he shouted it, and the second time he did so I was shaken by the stalwart fool in whose care I was, as though I had been a rat.

"Sir, is he hurt?" Honoria entreated of the detective.

"I am bound to inform you," the latter rasped, "that anything you say will be used in evidence against you."

"Only tell me if he is hurt?" she repeated. Her eyes swept the room; they dilated for a moment on the body lying in the corner.

One of the prisoners mumbled, good-naturedly, and as articulately as a man with a broken jaw may mumble:

"He's got off, ma'am—clean safe."

Her face became illumined.

"Is the battle won?" she faltered.

"We've dropped that king business," the other said, shortly.

Suddenly she bent her ear. She ran towards the door. A constable took her gently by the shoulder.

"Charles," she cried, in a low, piercing voice, "don't come, dear, don't come, there is danger."

Not a sound had been audible to anyone. An officer darted outside; after a minute he came back, "No one there," he said.

A minute later a man walked into the room; he was ghastly pale, and walked with difficulty. His right arm hung



"I SWEAR TO YOU THAT I AM KING"

broken at his side. Across one cheek a great gash went, and blood had dripped from it on to his collar and shirt. I knew him in a moment for the man with whom I had seen Honoria. It was a strong, bad face, despite its handsomeness. He walked in with a brazen coolness.

Half-a-dozen officers, McFerret among them, started towards him ; but Honoria was first, she had her arms about him, her cheek lay pressed against his cut one, where the blood was drying. She was sobbing her heart out in kisses.

"Dearest," she cried, as a soul might cry out for salvation, "tell me that what they say about you is not true. Tell me you are really a king."

With one clenched fist he parried the officers above her prone head, with his wounded arm he pressed her face down on his chest.

"Before God, Honoria," he cried out, passionately, "I swear to you, as I hope for mercy, that I am the lawful king, and you, my wife, are queen."

"O, thank heaven!" she cried ; "my dear, my dear."

He made a little movement towards his breast.

"Good Lord!" I shouted, "stop him."

But I was too late. There was a flash and a loud report, one long sob, and a quiver of her clinging frame. Then her arms fell from about his neck, a red stain spread in the side of her white gown.

In a moment a dozen hands were on him—in a moment she was torn out of his hold.

"Coward!" "Devil!" rose in execration round him. He was buffeted and roughly handled.

He flung the smoking weapon from him. The mortal hunger of the gaze he sent after it told at what price he had spared her his last bullet. He wiped his dry lips. Then his eyes turned towards her body, where they had laid it on a couch. For one moment Honoria's poet-knight, Prime Minister, looked out of his gashed face.

"Fools!" I heard him mutter, as they handcuffed him, "it is the one decent act of my life, and I shall hang for it!"





# *Some Experiences of Lord Syfret.*

BY ARABELLA KENEALY.

## *PRINCE RANJICATTERJEE'S VENGEANCE.*

ILLUSTRATED BY R. SAVAGE.

### CHAPTER I.

**L**ORD and Lady Wycombe had been dining with me. They were new friends, or, to speak quite accurately, new acquaintance, for I never regard as my friend any man I have not known ten years. I have calculated to a nicety that period as being essential to sufficient oxidation of the social polish to enable one to judge of what metal a man is made.

Lord Wycombe had no social polish whatsoever. In dealing with him you at no time saw yourself brilliantly or flatteringly reflected. He was not even nickel-plated. He was pewter right through—from the mugginess of his outer person to the inner recesses of that purely physiological contrivance which served him for a heart. Indeed, I used to wonder by what manner of means its valves worked. Without doubt, they worked stiffly and occasionally “clicked.”

The Wycombes were in my neighbourhood for the first time since their marriage, and for the first time since that ceremony were dining with me. I had ceased long before this to speculate as to why women marry particular men, or why men marry particular women. When the Powers had fashioned our world, they detected in it the possibilities of an Eden. This being not at all their intention, they inspired man with the fatal expedient of marriage, whereby he should make the one act of his life into which he would inevitably crowd the greatest measure of folly—irrevocable, and Eden has since translated itself to some remote and inaccessible region of space.

The Wycombes were a signal example of the human discord tethered fast and for all time with lawyer's tape. After she had left us that evening we remained

long over our wine. Or, rather, he did: for I, with marked intention, sat with an empty glass before me.

Suddenly he broke out brutally: “You wouldn't suspect that woman of being a common thief!” His face was flushed, his hand unsteady. Before we began dinner he had already taken his quantum of wine.

We had been speaking of his wife. I could not pretend ignorance of that he meant.

“Nobody would suspect Lady Wycombe of any more serious crime than that of breaking hearts,” I answered tritely.

“Ah! These lovely creatures have a dashed sight more original sin in 'em than most people give 'em credit for. But I'm no fool. Never was. Before I was twenty I could give you most women's price—and calculated fine at that, even to the farthings.”

“I believe I could have done the same—though I will not answer for the farthings—at the same age,” I said. “Ten years later I was not quite so sure of my arithmetic. Now I have given up the practice altogether. To find the unknown quantity one requires certain data, and the difficulty of finding the difference between these in different women makes the calculation altogether too fatiguing, especially as it is pretty sure to come out wrong in the end.”

“Ah, you price 'em too high, I expect,” he said knowingly. “Now I never suffered from that.” He poured himself another glass of port. “Good wine,” he commented.

“And so you wouldn't suspect her charming ladyship of being a common thief. Now you're fond of stories, I hear——”

I pushed my plate of nutshells noisily before me. The pallid misery of a beautiful face was beside me again as it had been during dinner. I thought of her sitting upstairs alone but for

"though she thinks I do." (I remembered the haunting appeal her eyes had sent him over my shoulder as I held the door for her.) "You've got to keep the whip-

hand of a woman—when she don't care about you. If it wasn't for that little slip of hers she'd be always on a pedestal, and out of reach. And she'd never have been Lady Wycombe," he added, with an ugly look.

"Pooh!" I protested again; "if it is so long ago as that let it rest. Don't rake up an old story. You would be sorry for it to-morrow."

He struck his fist on the table. It rattled with a pewter ring.

"Damn her!" he cried. "I'll take the airs out of her. She don't talk to me



"THE APPEAL HER EYES HAD SENT HIM"

some grief that was sapping her life, while we men laid bare her sorrows over a bottle of port.

I rose. "Lady Wycombe is by herself," I said. "We must not leave her longer."

He stared. Then he filled his glass again. "By your leave," he laughed, "we'll finish this excellent bottle."

I had no alternative but to sit down again.

"I don't tell everyone," he began,

and look at me like she did with you to-night."

The brute was jealous. Heavens! And we had only been discussing some sanitary alterations she was planning for her cottagers, with a little hopeful eagerness.

"She was a Wells," he persisted, "a

familly of handsome girls with a gambling father. I was easy with him. He got more and more in my debt. I wanted her: she was the best-looking of 'em. But there was another man—some poor beggar of a diplomat—and she wouldn't look at me. I talked straight to Wells. I said, 'Look here, you know, she's got to have me or ——' well, he was mortgaged up to the hilt, and I was mortgaged. 'Well,' I said, 'you must talk it over with her.' I was fond of her—I'm fond of her now,' he interjected with bloodshot eyes." After a pause, during which he rolled my wine appreciatively on his tongue, he continued: "I knew how women sell their souls for diamonds. I sent her a magnificent necklace—a thing I'd picked up somewhere in the East"—he was silent for some minutes—"never seen such a thing," he resumed abruptly, "a rope of diamonds as big as beans, splendidly cut, and each set in the centre of four gold petals. It must have been worth at least ten thousand pounds. 'Put it round her neck,' I said, 'and take her to the glass, and tell her while she's admiring herself.' Well, I never saw the necklace again. Wells turned up next day with a long face, and the case, said he was deucedly sorry, but Miss Aline declined me at any price. Supposed things must take their course. I locked the case in my strong-room, like a fool, without looking at it. I instructed my lawyers. Just then, as luck would have it, somebody left the Wells a fortune, and I was paid in full. Wells sent a cheque and mentioned incidentally that Aline was shortly to marry her beggar. Now I might never have opened the necklace-case from that day to this, because I was not at all set on marrying, and Aline had given me a dose; but three days before that fixed for her wedding

something made me go to the safe and open the case."

"Well?" I questioned eagerly.

He tossed down the last glass of port. He turned his hot eyes on me. "So you're interested?" he said.

I made an effort. I rose. "I think we have finished our wine. Let us go upstairs."

He put a purple hand on mine. "By heaven," he cried, "you shall hear me out. When I opened the case——" he burst into a rough laugh. "What a fool I might have been: in two days she would have married the other man—when I opened the case——"

"There was nothing there," I broke in, and could immediately have bitten my tongue out.

"Oh, she was not so fresh," he said. "There was a string of metal beads with a brass enamelled clasp—worth, I should say, some couple of shillings—but heavy enough and capable of rattling so that the fraud might have been long undetected."

"Of course, it occurred to you her father took them?"

"I cleared that up. He wasn't that kind of man. He was dumbfounded. There was no mistake about it. He was like a madman. Offered to sell all he had to keep it quiet. Aline had taken charge of them that night."

"Where did she put them?"

"Locked the case up, so she said, with her other things. Took it out next morning and handed it to her father. She had guilt all over her when I confronted her. She didn't marry the beggar."

"Why did you marry her after such ——"

"Oh, I had never supposed her an angel," he said, coarsely, "and I wanted her."

## CHAPTER II.

I WAS calling on Lady Wycombe. I had been able to give her some hints as to the new plans. When that look of fixed misery slipped out of her face she was a lovely woman. As I was leaving her manner changed. She hesitated. The hand in mine trembled. She raised a pair of appealing eyes.

"Lord Syfret," she said, "Henry has told me your kind—most chivalrous intention. I cannot thank you enough,

but, believe me, the very greatest kindness you can do me is to let the matter rest. It is five years, and, Heaven knows, I have suffered enough."

"Lord Wycombe should not have mentioned it. I asked him particularly not to do so. Only if I discovered the real culprit——"

She shrank before me. A hot flush rose in her cheeks.

"You believe me innocent?"

"The question needs no answer."

She dropped into a chair and covered her face with her hands. "For Heaven's sake, if you know what pity is, let the matter rest. Even should you clear me——" She broke off abruptly. Her manner made it evident that she knew something. "Even should you clear me——" I finished the sentence: "You would inculpate someone dearer." I do not approve of scapegoats, howsoever willing. Let each man take the blame due to him. "Lady Wycombe," I objected, "you know my hobby. You must please permit me to ride it on this occasion. I give you my word that should I discover anything—a remote possibility—I will not move a step nor say a word without first consulting you."

"Thank you," she faltered, "but your greatest kindness would be to discover nothing."

"Have you the metal beads?"

She lifted her head out of her hands.

"I have never seen them," she said simply.

Then perceiving the significance of her admission, "Please, please," she entreated, "let the matter rest; I can bear the blame."

On the stairs I met Wycombe. He scowled under his shaggy brows. He was jealous of any man who lifted hat to her.

"By-the-bye," I said coolly, "do you happen to have those metal beads you spoke of?"

"What the deuce should I keep such rubbish for?" he blurted bluntly. "I flung them out of window."

"Then you acted like a fool," I said as bluntly; "they were the chief clue to the thief."

Two days later I opened my *Times* with interest. I turned to the advertisement sheet. "I hope it has a prominent place," I reflected.

It had, and read as follows: "*A Thousand Pounds Reward*.—Anybody giving information which shall lead to the recovery of a certain diamond necklace of unique pattern, consisting of thirty-four large diamonds—each set in the centre of four beautifully-wrought gold petals, shall receive the above reward. Apply, &c."

And below this, another: "*Ten Pounds Reward*.—Any person who picked up, or has knowledge that will lead to the recovery of, a string of

metal beads lost outside a house in Eaton Square on or about the 10th of April, 1883, shall receive, on proving it to be the same, the above sum. Apply, &c."

"Now for bogus applicants," I mused, when I had found the advertisement duly published in the half-dozen papers to which I had ordered it to be sent. Then, "Good heavens!" I ejaculated. For immediately below my second advertisement I found the following: "*Four Thousands Pound Rewards* shall be given to any mans informing news to discover a diamond necklace composing of thirty-eight beautifully cut diamond dewes dropped in richly embossed golden tulip-flowers with four leaved. To be communicated with Somers, Grand Hotel, between ten and four."

Below this still another: "*Four Thousands Pound Rewards* shall be given to any mans informing news to discover a string of thirty-eight large beads in bluish-greys metal with octagonal clasp of gold enamel. To be communicated with Somers, Grand Hotel, between ten and four."

These advertisements I found in four of the papers in which mine appeared. I further learned that both had appeared every morning for the preceding week.

"So," I remonstrated with Wycombe on meeting him later at the club, "you have taken that matter of the diamonds out of my hands?"

He stared. "I am a little curious to know why you did not put your advertisement into intelligible English. Or were you the victim of an unlettered printer?"

"Perhaps you will explain what you are talking about," he said.

I took him to the reading-room. I showed him the advertisements. "Good Lord," he broke out, "why it's my necklace. The description is exact."

He assured me he had nothing to do with the advertisements. He had come to his conclusions long before. I thought he looked perturbed. He begged me to let the matter drop. But the chase had grown exciting. I took my hat. I jumped into a hansom, and was soon at the Grand Hotel. It was within seven minutes of four as I drove up.

"Is Mr. Somers in?" I inquired of the porter.

"Is it the advertisement, sir?"

"Yes"



"Ah, that's Prince Ranjichatterjee."

A little man with long white beard and Hebrew features slipped something out of his eager dirty fingers into those of the porter.

"Remember I wash firsh," he whispered. The coin was small. I cast a calculating eye over the shabby Jew. Sixpence I decided. I put a half-crown into the porter's other hand.

The Prince was in, I believed, giving him my card.

"This gentleman was first, my lord," the man responded, firmly, and passed the dirty Hebrew on to a page-boy.

"I am afraid your lordship is too late for his Highness," he added, civilly. "He sees nobody after four; and to-day's the last day. There's been about three hundred people to see him already." He tested between his teeth the coin the Jew had given him. It was a half-sovereign. I anathematised myself for a fool; Jews are not stingy when four thousand pounds are in the running. At that moment the Jew came hurrying back. His face was crest-fallen. The boy behind him grinned wide-mouthed. The Jew darted at the porter.

"Gif me back my 'alf soferings. The Prince not see me," he shrieked. The porter gazed benignly and unconsciously upon him from a height of six feet two.

"No, sir," he said, indulgently. "No ole cloes to-day."

The clock marked three minutes to the hour. "Take me to the Prince," I insisted.

There was some demur at the door. Then my card was sent in, and after a minute I was admitted to a room which had been Orientalised so far as were possible to a room in a London hotel. Divans and couches draped with magnificent rugs and luxuriously cushioned took the place of chairs. Hanging lanterns curiously wrought, and with panels of rich glass, shed a dim light. There was a heavy aromatic odour on the air.

In the middle of the room, with a table before him, sat a lithe, eager-looking man—a Hindoo. His eyes flashed toward me like two lamps. He returned my bow without rising, and waited for me to speak. Behind his chair four men stood like sombre shadows.

"I have the pleasure to address His Highness Prince Ranjichatterjee?" I began. He bowed again.

"You advertised I believe——"

The Prince extended a finger with a curious gliding stealth. Not a muscle of his face moved. I heard the distant "ting" of a bell. Immediately four other shadows seemed to start up from the floor noiselessly and like inanimate things. Two of them took up their stations at opposite doors of the room, at the same time folding the heavy wadded portieres well over these. I felt two steal up close behind me. Instinctively I had ceased speaking.

"I advertised——" the Prince suggested with a sinuous bend of his dark head.

"You advertised with regard to a diamond necklace. I also am seeking a diamond necklace——"

"You have lost a diamond necklace?" the Prince insinuated. I nodded. It was sufficient for his purpose.

His eyes emitted light. "The necklace I have seeking," he said, softly, "is unquittous. It do be consisting of thirty-eight diamonds."

"Ah!" I said, "the one I mean had only thirty-four."

He seemed taken aback.

Then a wily look stole into his face.

"It is not difficult to subtract four diamonds from thirty-eight."

"So then," I said, "you lost it first?"

He fixed his eyes expressionlessly on me. I felt the steamy breath of the men behind me unpleasantly hot on my neck.

Then the Prince observed suavely:

"In a world where the lady is half people, there is many necklaces."

"That is true, of course," I admitted, "but your necklace was composed of diamonds set in the centre of golden tulips, golden tulips with four leaves?"

"Tulips has five," he said, simply. "It be a mistake. The jeweller was his head chopped off." There was quite a sweet smile on his face as at the recollection of something delectable.

"Good gracious! is that how you do things?"

"We do things, so there is no more talk," he purred.

"Well, sir," I went on, "I should think there is not much doubt about it that your necklace and my necklace are one and the same. The four-leaved tulip settles it. There would not be two necklaces of so curious a pattern."

His face paled. His eyes seemed to go out.

"No," he said, almost inaudibly, "it



"BUT SHE WITHHELD HIM"

was my idea. She was the lovely dew-drop, the petals of my heart to enfold her."

"How did you lose it?" I questioned.

His eyes lit up again. His face got colour. He made a little motion with his hand.

"That you will tell me," he said, blandly.

Before I knew where I was I found myself gagged, upon my knees, with four men standing over me, and round my throat by some mysterious means, a bow-string drawn sufficiently tight to be somewhat more than an unpleasant hint.

### CHAPTER III.

IT sounds like a bit from an "Arabian Nights." At the moment, even above the consciousness that my life was not worth a minute's purchase—for there was no mistaking the grim sincerity of the Prince's face, nor the strictly business intention of the men about me—even at that moment I was conscious of a sense of the ludicrous. But there is an ugly feel about a bow-string, and the irrelevancy between it and my Bond Street collar soon ceased to amuse.

The Prince rose and came toward me noiselessly across the richly-carpeted floor. He spat before me. He struck me with a womanish feeble spitefulness on either cheek. Then he rubbed his long dark hands exultantly.

"So I be found you at last!" he said, with an evil chuckle. "I be found you at last, you robber of women."

His mood changed. He flung himself prone on the floor. He moaned, and writhed, and beat his clenched fists against the carpet. He struck his brows. "She is gone," he cried passionately, "my dewdrop, my pearl, my moon of the heavens. She is gone, and only it be with me to vengeance."

He continued in the same strain for some minutes, but the remainder of his lament was Hindi and unintelligible. He sobbed and gasped as though he had been a fractious child.

A woman stole in through a lifted curtain—a woman like a tawny tiger-lily, with wide full eyes deep-fringed and liquid, and a mouth like a scarlet flower. She glanced contemptuously at his grovelling figure, then moved toward it with the undulance of flowing water. She laid an ivory hand on either of his shoulders, and spoke to him in a foreign tongue. He rose with an abashed look; then, his eyes lighting on me, he made as if to renew his childish assault. But she withheld him, motioning him with a flash of her tropical eyes to his seat at the table. She took up

her place beside him, and for the first time, so far as I had seen, though I was aware she was conscious all the while of my presence, her dark glance fell on me. It was a long penetrating glance, and seemed to search my very soul. Then she stooped and whispered the Prince. He made a motion of his hand. The gag was removed from my mouth at the same time that one of the fellows beside me gave a warning tug to the string about my throat.

After a moment the Prince demanded in a voice of concentrated fury: "Was it from her you got the necklace?"

I shook my head. "The necklace has never been in my possession," I said. "You are making a mistake."

"Yet you have confessed you lost it," he insisted furiously.

"I have never seen it. I am seeking it for a friend who lost it five years since."

He scrutinised me fiercely. "Have you been once in Calcutta?"

"Never."

"Do you swear?"

"I swear."

The woman touched him questioningly on the shoulder. He evidently interpreted my words to her, for she scanned me narrowly. Then she stretched her hand toward the table. A bell "tinged." Immediately a swarthy negro entered. She directed his attention to me. He shook his head violently, mumbling something. He came towards me and carefully examined my face. Then he spread his hands with an emphatic repudiation, shook his head, and mumbled again. A question being put to him again, he shook his head. The Prince dismissed him. Then turning on me he demanded with sullen balked anger, "Who is your friend?"

"That," I said, feeling my tongue somewhat dry in my mouth, "I am not at liberty to tell."

A minute later I did, however. And

let any man feel his brain full and throbbing fit to burst with black blood, and his eyeballs force themselves between his lids like peas out of a pod, and I imagine he would have done the same. After all, I was not bound to take on myself Wycombe's responsibilities, supposing him to have incurred any in the affair, a suspicion I had no reason for entertaining. Certainly I did not suspect him of stealing diamonds; and in any case he need not be fool enough to put his head into such a noose as I had done. They slackened the string and dashed water into my face. After a time I got breath, and told what I knew of the matter. I was compelled to point out Wycombe's name in a *Peerage* which they laid before me. The Prince put an ominous angry-looking cross in red ink against it.

"And the lady?" he said.

He made a gesture of inquiry towards the face of the woman beside him.

"No," I said; "she is an English-woman. She has never been to India. My friend had the necklace before he knew her."

"Among the women of his house is there a lady of my race?"

I could hardly remain serious. The notion of Lady Wycombe harbouring such a rival beneath her roof was so preposterous.

"My friend bought the necklace," I insisted. "A man of his wealth and position does not steal diamonds."

"Nor women?" he questioned, with an evil look.

I shrugged my shoulders. "Lord Wycombe assures me he bought the jewels in Calcutta. I have no doubt he will give you the name of the man from whom he bought them."

He motioned one of the men behind him. "Bring Lord Weekam here," he said imperiously. The man moved to the door.

"Prince Ranjichatterjee," I said, "you are, maybe, a powerful prince in your own country, and accustomed to be obeyed. But in England men do not go hither and thither at another man's

word. I warn you Lord Wycombe will not come."

He started up with clenched hands. "I shall make him!" he cried shrilly.

The woman cast some contemptuous epithet at him. With a spasm of uncontrollable rage he motioned one of the guards towards her. The man took two steps forward. She laid her scarlet lips back over her gleaming teeth, and pointed him with a scornful finger to his place again. Then she spoke low in the Prince's ear.

"Will you send a letter to your friend, asking he comes?" he demanded, petulantly.

"No," I replied, "I do not like your way of treating your guests."

Livid with rage, he interpreted my answer to her. I thought she glanced towards me with the suspicion of a smile. She addressed me, but her words were unintelligible. I bowed and shook my head.

"What will you do?" the Prince interpreted.

"I will do what I can to bring my friend here to-morrow," I replied.

"Do you swear by your God?"

"If you insist on it," I said. "I cannot be sure he will come, but I will do my best."

"And the lady?" he questioned, with flaring eyes.

"No," I said, "not the lady; she has nothing to do with it."

He lost his temper again. He could not tolerate the slightest check. Again the woman soothed him. I was sworn by half-a-dozen oaths to secrecy as to that which had occurred. I was put upon my honour. Then the bow-string was slipped up over my chin, with permission to leave.

As I took myself down the hotel steps, where the Jew stood expostulating still with the blandly dissenting porter, I congratulated myself on an adventure the recollection of which would preserve me from boredom for many a long day, though all round my neck was a girdle of raw skin which my collar unpleasantly rasped.

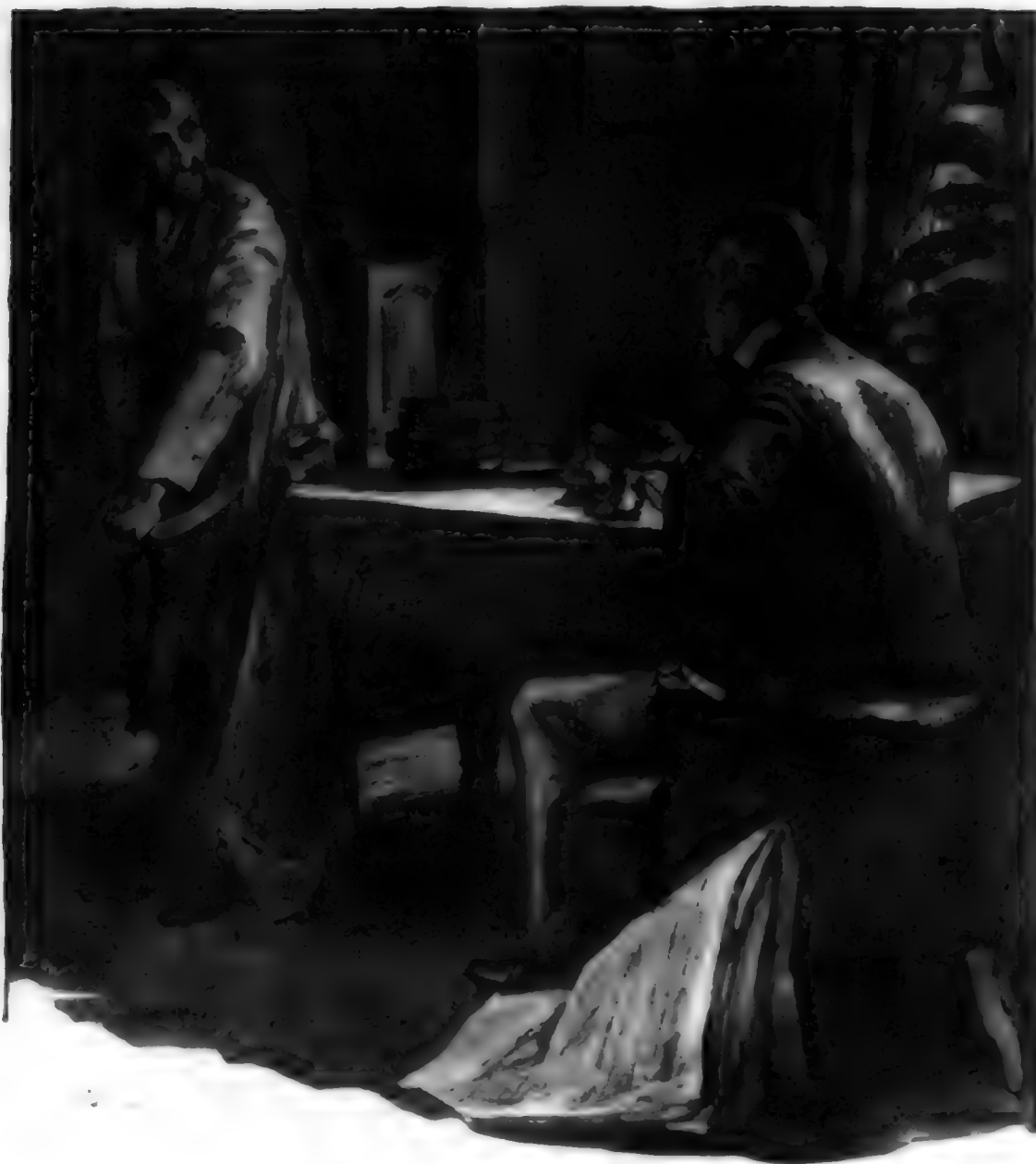
## CHAPTER IV.

"RANJICHATTERJEE!—the devil!" Wycombe ejaculated, with a curious change of expression.

"A near relative, assuredly," I agreed.

Why did his lips blanch? He lost his accustomed bluster. There was a strange, sudden stillness about him, as of a man meeting his fate.





"WHAT ARE THEY MADE OF?"

He saw my eyes on him. "I hate these Hindoo fellows," he blurted, drawing in his breath.

"You need only give him the name of the jeweller," I said.

"Oh! the name of the jeweller," he echoed stupidly. His mind was very much elsewhere.

He broke out suddenly: "Why the devil did you ever go into the thing at all? See what you've done, with your confounded meddling."

"Plainly," I said, "the necklace had a history before it came into Lady Wycombe's hands."

"I did as much for her as anybody would have done," he cried. "I didn't want her wretched necklace. I told her to take it with her."

"The jeweller's name is by no means all the information you will be able to give his Highness," I said, drily.

"His Highness will whistle a cursed time," he said, with that same stillness about him, "before he makes my acquaintance."

"Who was she?" I inquired.

"Oh, you can have the whole story. She was one of his—wives. The harem garden overlooked mine. She was a soft little creature, with eyes like moons and a little red mouth no good for anything but kissing—the kind a man gets tired of in a week. Of course, I got tired of her—dead, dead sick of her. But what could I do? She crept in one night with her hands running blood. He'd found out something, and, in a rage, had her

wretched little thumbs cut off. Of course, I had to take her in. There was a tremendous hue-and-cry. He's a great man out there, and she was his favourite wife. I kept her hidden as long as I was in Calcutta, and brought her as far as Bombay when I left. I couldn't bring her to England."

"What did you do with her?"

"I didn't do anything. I gave her money."

"She couldn't work without thumbs, poor creature."

"Oh, she couldn't work," he said. "Women like that don't work. I gave her money. She was pretty."

"And the necklace?"

For a time he would not speak. Then he said suddenly: "Oh, have the whole story if you like. She was a little fool. The night before I left she found she wasn't coming. She crept in and kissed my feet and hands and cried, and bent her head before me—the women there have different ways from our women, goodness knows—and next day I found she'd left her confounded necklace round my throat. I tried to trace her."

"Did she take the money?"

He got up blustering: "What the deuce does it matter. She would have if she'd had a grain of sense."

"Well," I said, "I don't think I should have mixed up a necklace with a history like that, in a love affair of any importance."

Later on he came to me with a sick face. "I'm off to Paris to-night. There's a beast of an Indian been following me about all day. These fellows stick at nothing. My life was attempted in Madras. Why the deuce did you rake up the affair again?"

"Why the deuce," I answered, "did you not tell me the truth in the beginning? Then I should have known there was excellent reason for letting it rest."

I called, next morning at the Grand.

"No, thank you," I responded to the porter's invitation to walk upstairs; "I will see his Highness in the public drawing-room."

I adjusted my shirt collar. That galled furrow round my throat rode on the edge of it as martyrs are said to have ridden on ploughshares. I chose a recess in which we might talk unobserved. The Prince came in presently, glancing about him with a haughty intolerance as though he expected the

several occupants of the room to salaam, and abjectly retire.

"So your friend—he sail away," he began maliciously.

"My friend had business which deprived him of the pleasure of meeting you this morning," I returned, with an uncomfortable sense that Wycombe had by no means got out of the wood when he booked for Paris.

"What he do with her?" he demanded feverishly.

I declined to say anything. I had no personal knowledge of the affair.

"I make him tell," he said with evil eyes.

I warned him that should anything happen to Wycombe, suspicion would fall on him.

"Pooh!" he said, "you have to prove. I no fool."

"By-the-bye," I urged, "I see you advertise for a string of metal beads, and strangely enough offer as large a reward for these as you do for the diamonds. What do you know about the metal beads?"

He scanned me curiously. Then he said with a significant smile: "Weekam, he shall tell you."

For the first time I felt a suspicion of Wycombe's good faith in the matter. Next morning I received a note from Lady Wycombe:

*Dear Lord Syfret,—I shall be glad of your advice. Lord Wycombe is away. For the last few days the house has been watched and I have been followed by some curious-looking foreigners. As I left the carriage two evenings ago, one put his face close up to mine, examining me as if for some purpose, and my maid last night found my bedroom door locked. She ran downstairs for help, and on returning she and some of the men found my jewels lying about the room. Nothing had been stolen—I suppose the thieves were frightened and left hurriedly.*

I drove at once to Piccadilly. The house was in the hands of the police. Lady Wycombe looked very much alarmed. She held an open letter in her hand. "It is strange," she said, "but they write from the Towers (the Wycombe's country house) that similar dark foreigners have been haunting the place, peering inquisitively into the women-servants' faces, and asking questions in the village."

"Heavens!" thought I, "I have indeed brought a hornet's nest about my friends."

I reassured her, at the same time keeping my own counsel. I knew well enough no danger threatened her. They were but seeking the Hindoo woman and the necklace. I called again next morning. I was shown into Wycombe's library. "I will tell her ladyship," the footman said. Then he blurted an apology, for her ladyship was already there—her ladyship confronting a tall distinguished-looking man, who stood over her with angry eyes.

"And you dismissed me on so pitiful a lie!" I heard him say as the door opened.

I had met the man some evenings earlier at a reception given by one of the Embassies. He had but lately returned from abroad. In a moment I made up my mind that this was the "beggary diplomat" Lady Wycombe had been within three days of marrying.

We exchanged bows. "Lord Syfret," he said at once, "I hear from Lady Wycombe that you are moving in the matter of a certain diamond necklace. I shall be infinitely obliged if you will transfer the matter to me. I have good right indeed, for it appears I am under suspicion of having stolen it."

She made a gesture of protest.

"Oh, how cruel you are!" she cried, under her breath. "I have never said a word."

"It should give you some pleasure," I said, formally, "to take the suspicion on yourself. Lady Wycombe has borne it long enough."

"Lady Wycombe," he echoed. "Aline, has anybody dared——"

She burst out in tears.

He bent above her prone head. "That, then," he said, tenderly, "is the reason for your miserable face?"

"No, no," she whispered. "I could have borne that if—if I could have kept my faith in you."

"And this is a woman's faith," he said, bitterly, "to take the man she was within a few hours of marrying for a common thief—to dismiss him without a chance of clearing himself, and to marry another man within six weeks."

"What could I do?" she faltered. "You were with me that evening. You

unclasped the necklace with your own hands and put it in the case. The case was returned to Lord Wycombe next day. Father himself returned it. When Lord Wycombe opened it there was nothing but a string of beads. He threatened proceedings. I knew you were poor. Forgive me—oh, forgive me—I thought it would be discovered, and I—I married him."

"It was a trick on his part"—he began.

"I think not," I said. "Wycombe was certainly sincere about it. He believes honestly to this day that Lady Wycombe stole the jewels. The mystery goes deeper than that."

I took him aside. I told him all the circumstances.

"Why did Ranjichatterjee advertise for a string of metal beads in connection with the diamonds?" I asked.

"We will find out from himself," he said.

But the Prince had only a tissue of Oriental lies to tell us.

"The diamonds, they was charmed," he said, turning his wily looks from one to the other of us. "On the throat of the disloyal wife the dew-drops be lose their crystal lustre and become as mere dross till they be charmed again. The *yogi* jeweller I threaten him with death if he make me not such a necklace, so I keep my women's hearts my own. Seven times the charm it worked, and seven times I rid the world of the disloyal wives."

"He is only laughing at us with his *yogi* rubbish," Redvers said, indignantly.

"Your friend, Lord Wycombe, be he well?" Ranjichatterjee queried, guilelessly, as we departed.

But it appeared our friend, Lord Wycombe, was not well, for Lady Wycombe met us with a telegram.

"Henry is very ill," she said. "I am starting immediately for Paris."

I travelled with her, leaving Ranjichatterjee to Redvers.

But we were too late: Lord Wycombe had been found dead in his room that morning, from what cause was never discovered. There was evidence neither of violence nor poison. Redvers and I kept our suspicions to ourselves, for Ranjichatterjee disappeared within ten minutes of our leaving him.

## CHAPTER V.

IT will be remembered that in advertising I offered a reward of ten pounds for a certain string of metal beads which could be proven to have been picked up in Eaton Square on or about a certain date—the date on which Wycombe had furiously flung it from his window. I had begun to doubt his good faith in the matter, when one morning there was

"The rewardish was not enough to pay a toiler for ish trouble," he retorted, slily.

"You thought the fool who offered a reward so large for a thing so worthless must require it badly, and would offer more?" I said.

He grinned. I was evidently a person of intelligence. "Oh, they are very good



"INSTANTLY THERE WAS A DAZZLE OF LIGHT"

ushered into my room the little old Jew I had previously encountered at the Grand Hotel. I recognised him in a moment.

"There wash ten guineas offered in reward for a shtring of beads?" he began.

"Ten pounds."

"Oh, shay ten guineas for a poor ole man," he insinuated, with a detestable leer.

"Not a penny more than I have said. Why did you not come before?"

beadsh," he said, heartily. "My little grandschild—my dear little grandschild pick them up in Eaton Shquare. I take great care of them since."

"I suppose round the grandchild's neck," I said.

"What it matter?" he replied, distinctly abashed. "It do no harm if she wears them shjust a little. She very careful."

"Where are they?"

He produced cautiously from the shabbiest of leathern bags a paper parcel,



which, unfolded, proved to contain a string of blue-grey beads of a curious metallic lustre. I counted them. There were thirty-four. I thought them strangely heavy.

"What are they made of?" I inquired.

"Foreign metal," he said; "very good foreign metal. I do not know."

"You will have to prove your granddaughter picked them up in Eaton Square on or about the date specified."

"Yes, I shee her," he said glibly, "and my wife she shee her."

"Ah," I said, "I shall want some other evidence than that."

He burst into tears. He protested that his word was as the Gospel. I had been mechanically slipping the beads from one hand to the other. Suddenly I dropped them into my pocket. I took ten pounds from my desk. "Well," I said, "I will take your word for it. I believe these are the beads." I put the note into his dirty hands.

He looked up cunningly into my face. "You very glad," he said; "your hand shake bad—your voice change. Gif poor man some more—a little more because he take such very good care of that you prize so much."

"Not a cent," I protested, controlling my voice; "but if you send your grand-

child here to-morrow I will give her a five-pound note for herself."

Lady Wycombe and Redvers were to be married the following day. Her year of conventional mourning was up.

"Let me present you with a second wedding-present," I said nonchalantly, calling on her that evening. Redvers was on the point of bidding her good-night.

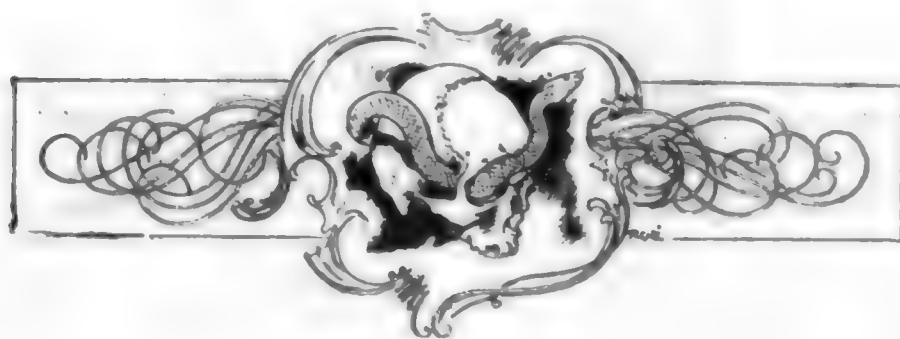
"What trick or double-dyed generosity is this?" he asked. He was looking well pleased into her lovely eyes. Then—

"Good heavens, Syfret! why don't you let that story drop. One is weary of the name of metal beads."

"Permit me," I said. I clasped them round her throat. In doing so I pressed a spring in the enamelled clasp.

Instantly there was a dazzle of light. The soft electric lamps sent sudden challenging and interchanging gleams across the room to where a focus of prismatic radiance played in parti-coloured flame about her. For her throat was strung by a string of four-leaved golden tulips, and from the yellow cup of each a magnificent diamond blazed.

Ranjichatterjee's *yogi* jeweller had practised a slight deception on his princely master.



# *Some Experiences of Lord Syfret.*

BY ARABELLA KENEALY.

## *THE METAMORPHOSIS OF PETER HUMBY.*

ILLUSTRATED BY R. SAVAGE.



### CHAPTER I.

IT would have been difficult to find a plainer man than Peter Humby. There was not one of his features which bore even a distant kinship with another. Whole cycles of evolution yawned between some of them, for though his nose was characteristically Napoleonic, belonging therefore to our century, his forehead was aboriginal, while his eyes and brows suggested a possibility of having been wrested entire from the countenance of some early and heathen Chinese. To make matters worse he had the complexion of a negro and a shock of light-red hair. The whole effect was singular and striking, but from the moment it loomed on your horizon you made up your mind that Peter Humby was about the least attractive looking person it had been your misfortune to meet.

The human mind is variable, its tastes diverse, yet I do not remember to have heard two even slightly differing opinions on the subject. Nor have I known anybody modify his first impression and say, as one does say, "Well, after all, when you get accustomed to him, Peter is not so absolutely hideous." He was as hideous at the end of twenty years as he had been on the day when you first met him. I imagine it must have been the irrelation of his features which aroused a kind of chronological confusion in the mind. A silk hat is not perhaps an altogether unlovely thing, inasmuch as it possesses attributes of symmetry and sleekness, but worn with a toga or a kilt it would produce in you much the same sort of exasperation Humby's face did.

Of course Humby was married: one never yet came across a man or a woman sufficiently plain who was not, plainness possessing its own inherent charm. Of course, also, he was married to the prettiest woman in the village. It was said that when Humby went courting he could have had his pick of the very comeliest girls. The confusion produced in their minds by those incongruous features of his resulted in a kind of fatal and irresistible fascination. And the village belle broke off her engagement with the village beau in order to give Humby an opportunity of proposing to her.

But even this triumph did not dissipate the gloom as to his looks, which haunted him up to the period of middle age. From the hour of his birth his mother proclaimed herself ashamed of him, repudiating her responsibility in the matter by avowing everywhere that if she had had the modelling of him, she would have turned out a very different article. She maintained sturdily, and it may be confessed also wordily, that her poor ugly duckling must of necessity "favour" his father's family, for nobody on her side had ever had such looks, an affront which Humby senior invariably retorted to by repairing straightway to the "Spotted Pig." It may be imagined that this particular bone of contention, resuscitated by one or other of his parents once at least in the course of every week, did not tend to raise poor Peter in his own esteem. And indeed had I not a "happy ever after" ending to this unlucky fellow's story I should never have had the heart to set out upon it.

Humby was some fifty years of age when I first knew him. He was then a

sullen-tempered, curt-spoken man of feeble brain and sour humour. To what extent his manners and character had suffered from the obloquy attaching to his

ugliness upon him, uttering blood chilling cries. The most careful of the housewives went out of their way to buy their milk elsewhere, regarding it as next to impos-



"FAMILIAR SEEMING FACES"

features it were difficult to say. But so far as one could learn, he had at no time been affable. He was a milkman by occupation, and walked the roads twice daily with his twofold yoke of milk and

sible that a milkman of such looks should not curdle the contents of his transplendent cans. But he was an industrious, hard-working man, and he had his supporters.

## CHAPTER II.

NOW there also lived in the village a Slade Professor, a notable artist and member of the Royal Academy. The Professor had founded an Art-School, and, reviving the fashion of a by-gone day, was friend and master to his students. Since its foundation, the village had furnished this school with rustic models, so that the stranger walking through its straggling high street and its lanes, would come upon familiar-seeming faces, which, idealised on canvas, had been lifted to the honourable altitude of Gallery walls. In time it happened that there were but few houses in the village which had not provided at least one model, a child, a mother, or a grandfather, for the students to make "studies" from. Only the most highly favoured by nature, however, attained the dignity of figuring in finished pictures.

Now I need scarcely tell you that Humby had never been harassed by importunities to "sit." Indeed this was one of the chief causes of his complaining, a tacit endorsement by the school of the village verdict. For Humby by no means shared the general impression on the subject of his looks. He examined his features in detail, and found some of them to be better even than those of his neighbours. To examine them in detail was of course the very thing he should not have done had he sought unprejudiced opinion; but it may be unprejudiced opinion was the last thing he was seeking. He had noticed, in a house to which he carried milk, a coloured print of Napoleon, and his sensitive vanity had in a moment detected some likeness in that of the hero to his one good feature. After this he always sturdily maintained that he had "a nose like a picter, which were a precious sight more than a many others could say." And he eyed with brooding detestation all such persons as, not having noses like "picters," yet "sat" to the students for their three hours' study.

Now things with Humby were bad indeed, for the next ugliest person in the village—a man he had always secretly delighted to believe a good many degrees more ugly than himself—had, partly by virtue of a dearth of models, but chiefly because of a certain stalwart build of chest, been sent for to the studio. For a whole week Humby did never a stroke of work, but lay out on his back all day

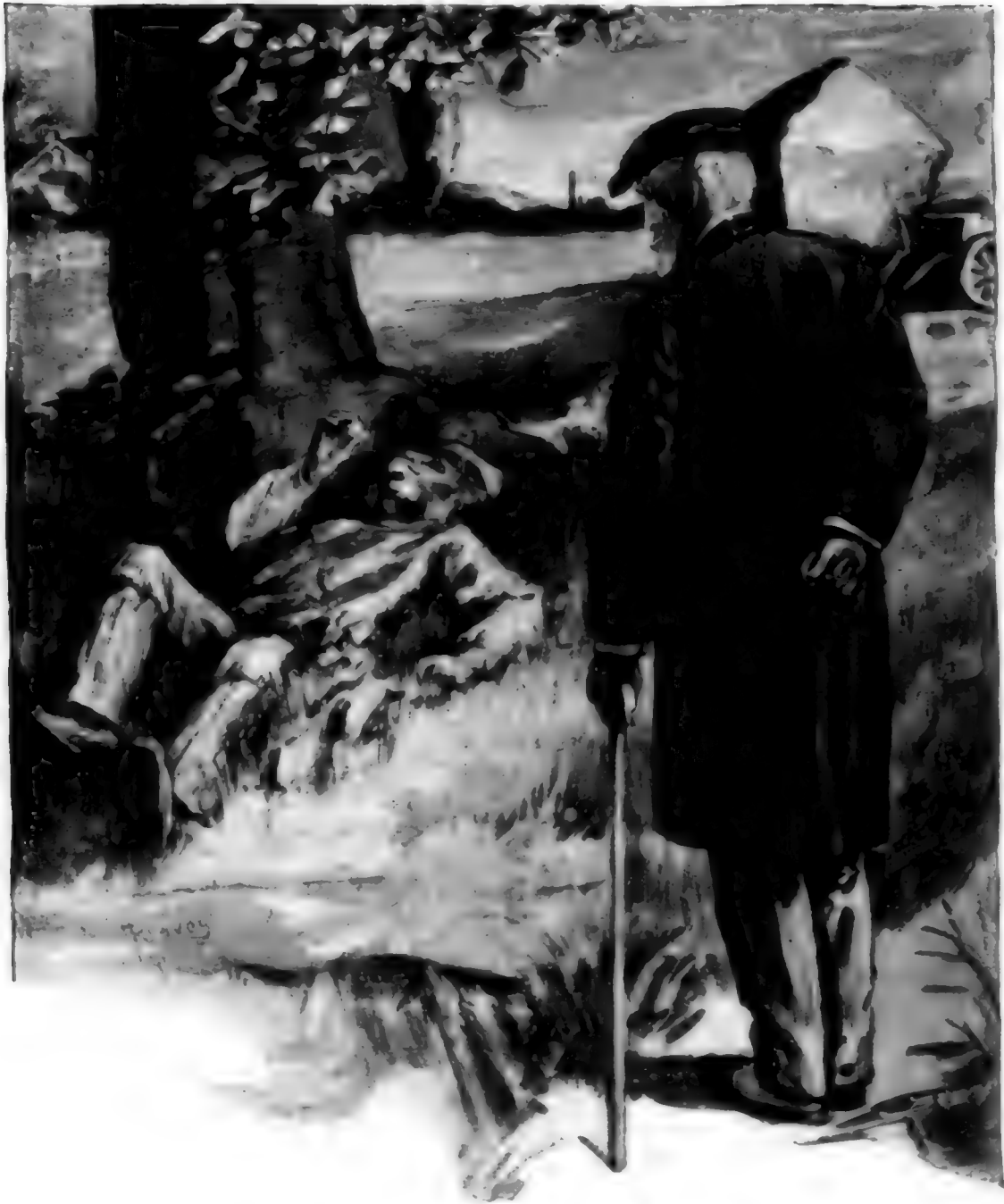
beneath an elm tree chewing the cud of bitter introspection. "Jacob ain't got a nose like a picter," he soliloquised, regarding his cherished feature from time to time in a fragment of looking-glass he carried in his pocket for that purpose. "Then why put Jacob *in* a picter?"

As luck would have it, while he lay rolling his prone uncouthness sullenly from side to side, anathematising the fate which allowed his one merit to escape recognition, the Professor passed his way.

The students had not of late been pleasing him. Some unexplained laxity of aim and falling away from the very catechism of his creed had set them striving after meretricious effect. They had imbibed a taste for sentiment and smoothness. The apotheosis of the "tea-tray" was imminent, the oleograph held the floor. The Professor had been at his wit's end as to how he should stem the tide of wishy-washiness that had set in. The worst of it was that their dangerous and fellow self-applauding lapse was encouraged by their aunts and cousins. "Dear and honoured Professor," a student's grand-uncle had that morning written him, "though an old man, I must make the journey of a hundred miles in order to shake you by the hand. You have *made* our Archie. I shall live to see him President. I have done something in art myself and know what I am talking about. Those cows in his last picture are as smooth and finely finished as if they had been cut out of velvet. I never saw a better bit of painting. And the bunch of roses in the foreground might easily pass for wax, it is so exquisitely modelled." It says something for the Professor's powers of moderation that on reading this effusion he came to the end without using any epithet stronger than "Good Heavens!"

The rays of the westering sun shot low beneath the branches of the tree where Humby lay, his face upturned, his eyes closed obstinately. From the point at which the Professor stood the Napoleonic nose was thrown up vividly against the tree trunk, the aboriginal brows, the Mongolian upward slit of the lids, the negro mouth and colouring, the pale red hair, illuminated by a flood of rosy light, surpassed themselves. The





"HOW THE FELLOW GETS ON ONE'S NERVES"

Professor gazed. A smile broke slowly over his face. He chuckled. He rubbed his hands. "I fancy Humby's drawing would settle them," he mused. "If they get any of the pretty-pretty into that they are cleverer than even they suspect." Succumbing to the awful fascination inseparable from them, he lingered scanning the sun-suffused features. "By Jove," he broke out, "how the fellow gets on one's nerves. I should not particularly care to tackle him myself. Yes, I'll give them Humby. I say, my man!" he concluded aloud.

"Durned ef I be yourn nor any other felly's man," the prostrate Humby growled,

his eyes still obstinately closed. The Professor marked the way in which the Mongolian lids assumed a still more upward slant, and how the nose came villainously down to their possessor's mood. Again he chuckled. He imagined Humby would sober them!

"Get up, Peter" he said, "I want to talk to you."

"Then I'm danged ef all the wantin' beant on your side, for I'm bothered ef any uv it be on mine," the amiable Peter retorted. His countenance relaxed as if he congratulated himself on having got the better of an adversary. Perhaps he was looking for its effect, for he suddenly

sat up and opened his eyes. "O it's you, Purfessur," he grunted, more civilly.

"Yes. Do you want a job?"

"No, I'm smothered ef I do." He flung himself down on his back again and shut up his eyes with an air of dismissing the subject and its propounder.

"O, very well," the artist said, moving away, "only I thought you might like to sit to the students."

Humby sat up again, this time with energy.

"Wot be that, maister?" he cried. "Say it again, maister."

"Would you like to sit up at the studio?"

"Me—like—to—set?"

The Professor nodded.

"Pete Umby?"

"Peter Humby."

Peter turned it over in his mind with a deliberation in which uncertainty had no share. Then he slapped his thigh. "Blest ef I wouldn't," he blustered.

"Be at the studio to-morrow at nine then," the Professor called out as he walked away.

Humby gazed after him long. Then he took out his scrap of looking-glass and studied his feature complacently. "Dom'd ef I didn't think they'd come to it!" he ejaculated and smiled. Fortunately for itself and for him the glass was not wide enough to attempt his smile!

### CHAPTER III.

WITH a serious face the Professor presented their new model to his class. Ridicule, rage, rebellion, were depicted on their countenances as the top light fell on Peter's feature, and his forehead shelving violently back into the shade, gave him an exasperating effect of having a face that began at the root of his nose. He had combed out his shock of rusty hair till it stood around him like a tepid halo, making a gruesome jar with his bronze and weather-beaten skin. The students in the foreground murmured and shuffled their feet, those further off grumbled *sotto voce*, while those in the rear gave snorts of disgust. One cried "Good Lord!"

The Professor passed the several rows in review with a quiet eye, demanding silence. In two minutes it had come. He then began: "Gentlemen, we have been travelling a bit too fast of late. We have been giving too free a rein to flowery fancy. Sentiment and Romanticism are well enough when they do not lead us to forget that one of the functions of art is to make itself intelligible. We have to speak to mortals less highly gifted than ourselves. In order that the general public—and, gentlemen, the general public is a factor in life—in order therefore that we shall be in some measure in touch with this factor, we are reduced to the necessity of presenting our ideas sufficiently like to nature that this general public shall be able to recognise the things we paint for the things we intend. Such commonplaces as cows and cradles should be distinguish-

able as cows and cradles, and should not be so rendered as to be possibly mistaken the one for the other, or for some third object—a haystack, for example. Nor in our repudiation of the realistic should we permit our cows and cradles to assume the semblance and texture of clouds. You have heard how Opie mixed his colours 'with brains, sir.' Let me suggest to you, gentlemen, if brains be not available, that you should nevertheless choose some medium of a firmer consistency than milk-and-water. Let me recommend you to return to common earth. Put aside hyperbole. Learn to paint cows. Learn to paint cradles. And though bones are not ethereal, do not altogether ignore them in your studies of the human form! To assist you in reverting to the real, I have procured for you a child of nature (*groans*), a subject which shall give your idealistic faculties a spell of well-earned rest. I have obtained for you a model—Peter Humby (*ironical cheers, and cries of 'Good old Humby'*) a model, 'good old Humby' as you say." Here the Professor levelled his dark eyes quietly on the loudest of the murmurers. A moment later you could have heard a pin drop. "Peter Humby," the Professor resumed, "the complex and intricate drawing in whose face will take your attention off its nobler attributes of symmetry and sentiment. The tints of his hair, gentlemen (*smothered ironical groans*), the tints of his hair, gentlemen, in juxtaposition with the tints of his complexion (*groans a little louder*), with the tints of his complexion—as I said the

tints of his hair, gentlemen, in juxtaposition (*the faintest of groans*), the tints of his hair, as I was saying, gentlemen, in juxtaposition with the tints of his complexion"—the Professor paused indulgently—"will prove to you an

Humby's nose and forehead, gentlemen, combined with his rare obliquity of eyes and brows, will do you good service in intricate drawing. The mouth—is that you again, Jones? You would do better to be advised—I was about to point out that the mouth of our admirable model will try your skill in both colour and drawing. And if any two of you agree as to the combination of pigments which shall faithfully portray his eyes, I shall be surprised. Gentlemen, let me commend to your industry and attention our model Peter Humby, of whom I should like you to make faithful and repeated sketches until you have mastered one of the most interesting and complex studies it has been my privilege to present to you. I should not, I think, in his case adopt any classic or heroic draperies. These would under the circumstances be superfluous. The man is admirable as he stands. And now, gentlemen, to your work!"



"RIDICULE, RAGE AND REBELLION WERE DEPICTED ON THEIR COUNTENANCES"

invaluable lesson in relative tones. The modelling of his nose and forehead (*a laugh*). Jones, your cough distresses you"—the Professor rested a tranquil eye on the offender—"perhaps the studio heat is too much for you. I will excuse you if you wish. No? Are you prudent in remaining? The modelling of Peter

was a vision of my old friend Humby. He was mounted on a dilapidated cart, which, having dropped by the wayside, nobody had made it his business to remove.

A crowd of youngsters stood about him, whispering one with another, and eyeing him with mixed looks of awe and fear.

#### CHAPTER IV.

I WAS some months absent from the village. On my return the first thing that impressed me



"MOUNTED UPON A DILAPIDATED CART"



He stood above them with an exalted mien, holding one arm aloft, and with the other sawed the air. His old hat tilted jauntily to one side, was bound about with lace and ribbons, and upright in the front of it was set an ostrich feather. Such colour as this once had known had been washed away by the weather, and the wind had broken it in sundry places, so that it drooped dismally. Round his throat were a couple of rabbit-skins, tied like a woman's boa with a bunch of ribbons. A pink and green rosette was pinned to one shoulder, a spray of dirty artificial flowers to the other. His trousers were tucked high up his calves and their edges were frilled with torn lace. He wore one blue stocking and one red, and about his ankles hung strings of beads. A length of scarlet baize fell sashwise from his waist, and from each end of this sash dangled an empty lobster tin. There was scarcely an inch of him which was not decked with odds-and-ends, ribbons, berries, flowers or silver paper. And out of all this bedizenry loomed Peter's face, uglier than ever, if that were possible—but happy, supremely and ecstatically happy. He had vindicated his appearance. He had proved the village wrong. Art had claimed him for her own. His nose had found its way into many scores of "picters," and one of these—a study, the cleverness of which showed the Professor to have been in the right when he "gave them Humby"—had held a place of honour in "the New." Since then he had never done a stroke of work, but, handing the milk-business over to his eldest son, spent his time declaiming, posing and generally vaunting himself before his neighbours.

He recognised me with a nod and a gleam of the supremest self-complacency. Then he re-assumed his grave demeanour, and began to speak, the children nudging

one another, giggling and whispering, but keenly interested. "There was me," he said, "a-living all a-the-midst uv ye, a deliverin' melk same as ef I'd been the hordinerest. Till the Purfessur he come along when I was lyin' hunder that there helm, and sez he to 'em he've the hintricutest face 'sever I sced. There's tints in 'im and tones in 'im. 'Is nose and 'is forrid is modled like ez ef it wuz a 'umin form. Genelmen, ef you wants to be genrally at the 'public' paint 'em cows and cradles: Genelmen, ef you wants to be genrally at the 'public' paint 'em clouds! Genelmen, ef you wants to be genrally at the 'public' paint 'em Umby! And genelmen, sez he 'none o' yer melk-and-water—that aint Umby's style. He ain't no adulter. 'Is melk's fust-rate, tho' 'is son Zeke now carries of it. He's a child o' nater. Genelmen,' sez he, 'the modlin' o' Peter Umby's nose and forrid is just sich a posishun with the tints o' his 'air combined with a raal alikuity uv heyes and brows ull do ye the goodest turn I know. Genelmen,' he goes on, 'Peter Umby's eyes is sich as I defy two uv ye together, 'ard as ye may try, to paint. Genelmen, I recommend to yer careful hindustry Mr. Umby. Master 'im. Study 'im. He's a hintrest and a com-plix ez it's been my privilidge to meet. Genelmen, Mr. Umby don't need clo's. E's hadmirable ez he stands. Genelmen, some fellies wants classy clo's, and some fellies wants harmour, same ez yer own feyther Jake Welch (addressing one of the youngsters) were put in at the stodyo to cover 'isself up with. But Mr. Umby don't call for nayther. Genelmen, Umby is hadmirable. Good old Umby! Give 'im three times three! Which they did—'earty, and then the Purfessur he looks straight afore 'im. 'And now, genelmen,' he sez sharp, 'git to work. Mr. Umby's a-waitin.'"



# Some Experiences of Lord Syfret.

WRITTEN BY ARABELLA KENEALY.

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## THE BEAUTIFUL MRS. TOMPKYNS.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. SAVAGE.

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### CHAPTER I.

*The following has been communicated to me by a medical woman of my acquaintance. It explains a mystery at one time much discussed in a certain circle. To many it remains to this day a mystery.*

“**S**HE’S just pining away before my very eyes,” Mr. Tompkyns said. Mr. Tompkyns was a person small of physique but great in the city, who had summoned me—the only medical woman in the neighbourhood—to prescribe for his wife. His pre-eminence in things financial was proclaimed, had the fact needed insistence, by the magnificence of his possessions.

The road to his house had taken me through miles of beautiful parkland, which was but a fraction of the Tompkyns estate, and was set with the rarest shrubs and trees that skill and gold could induce to grow there. The house was a marble mansion, each room a triumph of art. Yet with all his prosperities Tompkyns was able to ward from his lovely young wife neither sickness, nor childlessness, nor any other ill save hunger and cold and the blessing of drudgery to which flesh is heir.

No woman out of a Zenana could afford to wear such gorgeous gowns, no well-living reputably wedded woman boasted such jewels. Nor had any a more charmingly appointed house, or handsomer horses and carriages, to speed her through life. If she had wished she might even have wheeled on a silver cycle. Yet, as the poor little fellow deplored, she was pining away before his eyes.

She was a beautiful creature. Too ethereal for a goddess—our notions of goddesses have descended to us from an age of stone—she was like some pictured seraph. But in her face were lines of human yearning such as seraphs—so we

are taught to believe—are never guilty of, and her eyes suggested weariness and tears. She sat in her pink boudoir that morning a dainty iridescence in a silken tea-gown bedecked with ostrich-feathers and begirt with silver clasps. Her fingers flashed with rings of diamond, amethyst and pearl, and her great knot of nut-brown hair was loosely caught back on her neck by a silver dagger, diamond-hilted. Her small silk-stockinged feet nestled in satin slippers, and frills of the filmiest lace peeped out at the hem of her gown. If money were at all another name for happiness, then would the chalice of Mrs Tompkyns’ bliss have been full indeed, but happiness walks as frequently bare-footed as it does in buckled shoes.

Mrs. Tompkyns was manifestly ill. Health never showed a skin so milky or such lustrous eyes; nor have hands of her translucency a hold on life. “I have taken her abroad,” Tompkyns said, “but she only gets worse. She is crying all the while for home.”

He crossed the dainty room, every stick and stitch of whose daintiness belonged to him, as did the white-clad woman in its midst. He took one of her delicate hands in his. It shivered for a moment, then lay passive on his short stout palm. He held it wistfully, his mean features working with a pathos that would have dignified a visage less vulgar. But Tompkyns was exceptionally ordinary. “There’s a hand for a Christian,” he protested in his common way. “I’m downright ashamed of it. Looks as if I starved her.”



"WE ARE NOT A LONG-LIVED FAMILY"

Mrs. Tompkins laughed faintly and retook possession of her hand. "O no! You do not starve me, Robert," she rejoined.

They made a striking contrast, standing together; she with her willowy grace and refinement, he stunted, thick-set and without one line or feature that did not transgress the physical ideal. Yet there were sterling qualities in the man, qualities of industry, honesty, and affection, and the luxury with which he had beset this feminine blossom was the outcome of enterprise and dogged application. For Tompkins was a man of sturdy honour,

whose word was his bond, whose name in the city was safe as the Bank of England.

Nature had certainly been hard on him. Through all her transparent skin, his dainty wife flushed with repudiation at his coming. There was not a fibre in her but rebelled against him. She shuddered under his touch. Even the lustrous velvet pupils of her eyes shrank upon him. Yet she smiled and suffered his caresses, as if recognising the claims of his worth and affection, and the fact that she belonged to him. When he soon left us she drew a deep breath of

relief. Her whole expression changed. "I am not very strong," she said, "but there is really nothing wrong with me. My husband would take me away, and I am not happy except at home."

Her eye met mine just then. A sudden tide of sensitive blood rushed over her face and throat, her lids were down-cast with a curious consciousness. "I have never been strong," she continued, striving for composure. "We are not a long-lived family."

I went into her case, but could find no cause for her weakness and wasting.

"Does the mind never prey on the body?" she asked, impatient of my questions.

"Certainly," I answered, "but the fact of some physical failure just as frequently preys on the mind, and cause and effect get jumbled. Many a girl attributes to a sentimental cause the depression that is merely the outcome of dyspepsia."

"I do not know what dyspepsia means," she said, "but then I have never any appetite."

"You have not enough to do?"

"Do you know I was last week at four balls, two dinners, three hunt breakfasts and a wedding; and I had a good-sized house-party all the time."

"Then you have too much to do."

She shook her head. "When my time is occupied I do not brood."

"What in the name of wonder have you to brood over? If you were to see the conditions under which some of my patients live, you would learn what real trouble is."

"I daresay I would change with some of them," she said slowly, "for some of them have what I have not."

"One cannot have everything," was my sententious comment.

"Ah! but there are things and things," she answered with a quiver of her lovely lips.

With Tompkins in my mind, her meaning was evident enough.

Now in the name of all the gods who order domesticity, I pondered, let no Leander fall in Mrs. Tompkins' way. If, indeed, I added, remembering her sudden flush and consciousness, Leander be not already in the tide.

## CHAPTER II.

I COULD hear of no Leander. A doctor is made the recipient of much gossip, for in sickness persons wax confidential both as regards their own and their neighbours' affairs. But "the beautiful Mrs. Tompkins," as she was known through all the county, had shown no preference, had in fact for that very reason given dire offence among the train of cavaliers to be found at the charming heels of any young and attractive woman whose wifehood obviates the matrimonial risks besetting single blessedness. Her indifference to the other sex was so pronounced that it was generally conceded there must be somebody at a distance, or even somebody dead, whom she had met and loved before she married Tompkins. Nobody knew anything definite. They only knew that here was a young and lovely woman who plainly did not love her husband (a circumstance not regarded as unusual) or anybody else in view, and so they wondered who and where was the man she did love. They ignored the significant fact that many a young and lovely

woman is in love with nobody so much as with herself.

For some months after I knew her I was as sure there was no man in the case, as I was sure it was not herself of whom she was enamoured. Whosoever I met her, her eyes were seeking, always seeking. This characteristic gave colour in the minds of many to that belief in a somebody whom she had found, and, it might be, had lost again. But to me there was something in her great unhappy eyes that said she had never found him. A change came presently over her. There appeared a certain glow in her face and her eyes tranquillised. She smiled more often, more serenely. People said he had returned. But there was not a shadow of proof. Nor could those most concerned in ferreting scandals lay so much as a finger-tip on him.

I was dining one night with the Tompkins, being from time to time in attendance on her, when Tompkins sent for me into the library. It was evident something had happened. His face was white with a passion the glare in his



overhung eyes proclaimed to be anger. He walked about the handsome room, clenching and unclenching his fists.

"I overheard something as I left the dining-room," he began, stifling in his voice a rage that would have roared. Then he lost control. "If there's any truth in it I swear before God I'll kill him."

delicacy and melancholy have served for an excuse for idle tongues. You know as well as I do that there is not the least foundation for such a suspicion."

"I know! Great Heavens, what does any man know where a woman is concerned?" he raged.

"You are not just. I believe no one more honourable-minded lives."



"THE GLEAM OF SOMETHING WHITE."

Perspiration beaded his forehead, though all round the house the snow lay thick and the library fire had gone out.

"You know there's no truth in it," I insisted.

He turned on me suspiciously. "You have heard it then."

"I have heard some silly gossip. Her

He grasped my hand and wrung it. For a moment he was almost good-looking. "Thank you for that," he said, "thank you for it. I've always found her so. But what did Somers mean? He spoke as if he knew something."

"He knows nothing more, I am confident, than that she once very properly snubbed him. I have heard the whole thing threshed out. The worst they can say is that she must be pining for somebody because she has that touch of melancholy you know in her."

"Yes, but may it not be so? Why is she melancholy?"

"Temperament."

"Ah, you say so. But she is certainly melancholy—and ill."

His voice fell as though he feared to give substance to the truth by speaking it.

"God knows I'm not the sort of man for any woman to be in love with," he said presently. "I'm only a money-grubbing machine. I've been able to buy myself one of the loveliest creatures God ever made, but I can't make her care for me any more than she cares for one of the footmen." He laughed bitterly. "When I was a poor devil of a clerk I could spend hours in picture-galleries and fields. Now I have a picture-gallery and a park of my own it bores me to walk through them. I've spent my life in getting things I was all

the while losing the power to enjoy as I see ninety-five per cent. of my neighbours doing. While I've been grubbing money to set my wife in luxury I've been losing all that might have made her care for me. We haven't a taste in common. She is—well, you know what she is. I—well, you can see what I am."

The unfortunate man was unburdening himself to himself rather than to me, and I felt in the embarrassing position of one who overhears what is not meant for him. The contempt with which he reviewed his own shortcomings—and I could not deny that he had painted a faithful if a cruel portrait—was of a kind we sometimes indulge against ourselves in solitude, but rarely in public.

"If I ever have any sons," he wound up, "I'll stop the breed of money machines. I'll put them to the plough and make men of them."

### CHAPTER III.

IT was close upon twelve and I was on the point of retiring when some weeks later Tompkins thundered upon my door. Hearing him in the hall I went out. "Can you come at once?" he asked. "She is ill."

"What is the matter?"

"I charged her with it—and it's true," he broke out furiously.

"Did she admit anything?"

"Do women ever tell the truth? I caught her kissing his portrait. She wears a rose over her heart. And to think," he broke out passionately, "to think of the thousands of roses I have given her and she has thrown aside."

"A thing belonging to her girlhood," I hazarded, "withered and shrivelled almost beyond recognition."

"Not three days old, I'll swear," he said sardonically.

I found her in her white room, an exhausted, weary woman. Her appearance was alarming. I had not seen her for some weeks and, during that interval, she had altered sadly for the worse. She did not notice my approach. She lay on a couch with closed eyes. In the curled fingers of one wasted hand was a little heap of rose-petals—rose-petals obviously, as her husband had said, "not three days old!"

He turned on his heel and went out.

While we were getting her to bed a photograph slipped from her dress and fell on the floor, face down. In picking it up the maid half turned it over. I caught a glimpse of a noble head. The photograph was recent, for the name on the back was that of a photographer who had not long come into the neighbourhood. Poor Mr. Tompkins! I reflected, contrasting his appearance with that of this classic rival. And poor Mrs. Tompkins! I reflected, considering her white and wasted arms and the pathetic shrinking of her beautiful breast. What a tragedy civilization had made of nature. Every curve in her dainty womanhood called out for love: her seeking eyes, her tender hands, the unshed kisses of her mouth. Every nerve in her strung to the tension of the noble, cried for a hero. Society and her mother had given her—Mr. Tompkins.

Possibly weighed in the balance of citizenship the scale would speak in Tompkins' rather than in Leander's favour, but the Tompkins virtues were essentially of the counting-house order, and no woman has ever been found to love a man because he happened to be gifted with an exceptional head for figures, though many a woman has been found to marry one for no more valid reason!

## CHAPTER IV.

DESPITE the evidence of the rose and portrait, the object of Mrs. Tompkyns' interest remained concealed. All her husband's efforts, and though he maintained a sullen silence on the subject I knew he was moving heaven and earth to trace his rival, proved abortive. The post-bag held no letter either in her or the unknown's hand. She preserved the same indifference to every man who

his staff of servants might well have relieved him.

He was jealous that anybody but himself should do the least thing for her. But all that the poor man did out of the tenderest and finest in his nature, his mean appearance and ill-manner of doing spoilt. Though I saw and realised his merits I could not blind myself to the fact that he had not one quality to rouse



"I'LL FIND HIM YET"

visited the house. And she died by inches.

During this period Tompkyns behaved extraordinarily well. I was in constant attendance, and I never knew him to speak a word of complaint or rebuke. He was tender and kind to a degree pathetic to one who knew the circumstances. At the end of a long day in the city, and his days there were long and onerous, he would be ready—eager if need were—to sit up with her at night, to ride any distance for some trifle she desired, or to fulfil any other duty whereof

a woman's love. For nature making for physical perfectness gives physical perfectness her magic. And, as I have said, poor Tompkyns was so very ordinary.

Once as he arranged her pillows, during the illness that followed, I saw her turn and kiss his clumsy fingers wistfully. There was in her eyes a look of pain as though she would gratefully have loved him if she could. But nature had decreed against him—cruelly if you will—but nature did not want any of Mr. Tompkyns in her perfect man.

At the touch of her lips, an incoherent

moan, like the cry of a hurt animal, broke from him. He flung himself down by her bed, and buried his face in its satin and lace. The very abandon of his pain and passion would in another man have been convincing and coercive, but the intensity of the impulse only saved the unfortunate Tompkins from grotesqueness. The physical degeneracy consequent on his life and heredity masked the natural man. Romeo, for all his sentiment and ardour, could not move you vulgarly disguised.

Mrs. Tompkins was on a fair road to recovery when I found her one morning with high fever, a pulse that proclaimed the blood-tide dashing through its channels with devastating force, blazing eyes that seemed to scorch great circling shadows round them. "What is the meaning of this?" I questioned of her maid.

Her mistress's burning eyes flashed her an entreaty. But the girl was faithfully obdurate. "I told her I must tell you," she replied, "because she's just killing herself. She was out last night again, ma'am."

"Out! Out with the thermometer near freezing point! Out in all that rain!"

"She was in the quadrangle, ma'am. She's there for hours together. And it's enough to give anybody their death, let alone her being so delicate. I said I'd tell the doctor, ma'am. It wasn't anything but my duty," she excused herself.

Mrs. Tompkins' gaze met mine. Her face became suddenly suffused with that same blush and shame I had seen before. She turned her looks away. So there is a Leander, after all, I concluded, and I confess my sympathies at that moment were with Tompkins.

When she was better I warned her. "You must give up those visits to the quadrangle, my dear. The damp there endangers your life." She glanced at me beseechingly. Her hand stole up with a gesture of secrecy to something at her breast.

"Your husband is a kind but a jealous man," I went on, "and if he were to find anybody you care about, there would be sad trouble."

She gave a little choking sob and turned her face away. "There is nobody at all," she faltered.

I strolled one day into the quadrangle. It was, as Bradley had said, a dismal place

enough, and certainly the last place in the world for my delicate patient. It was shut in tomb-like by a wall of yews. It was marble paved and the pavement glistened dank and mossy. At one end a sun-dial carved in stone showed the hour in shadow; at the other a statue of young Antinous, begirt from shoulder to knee with a leopard-skin, stood poised holding a javelin lightly in one hand. He was set high on a mound of grass, and showed supple and beautiful against the hedge of yews. At the foot of the bank I found a fading rose.

I was turning aside with a cynical thought—for the rose had not dropped from the skies—when my attention was caught by the gleam of something white protruding from between the statue's shapely shoulder and his leopard skin. It was a note with the superscription "To my Dearest," in Mrs. Tompkins' failing hand. I felt myself at liberty to pocket it lest somebody less scrupulous should do so. It was stained and wet, having apparently lain in its hiding-place some days.

I restored it to her next morning. "I found it in the quadrangle," I said.

Her white face flushed and the hand she held for it shook till the paper rustled. She thanked me below her breath and with an air of shame. She leaned up presently as though she had it in her mind to speak, but she thought better of it and sank back on her pillows with a sigh.

Meanwhile where was Leander hiding! The world outside Mrs. Tompkins' gates had come to the conclusion that Leander was a fiction, just as the facts of his hitherto doubted existence were forcing themselves irresistibly on the notice of her own house.

Tompkins became a changed man. He was moody and absent. People wondered why he had taken to spending his Sundays and Saturday afternoons in pistol-practice. Two or three youths not yet of an age to realise that which is due to the millionaire hazarded the witticism that Tompkins projected inviting the Prince of Wales or the German Emperor to shoot over his coverts the following season, and being city-bred imagined partridges and pheasants to be brought down with revolver and bullets. But if they had met the man as I have met him, his sallow face ashen, his mouth one grim line, his eyes fixed wildly as in some lonely corner of his park he





"PRONE AT THE STATUE'S FEET"

aimed for the heart of an imagined adversary, they would have held their peace. He prowled about at night and came home at odd seasons. Of all of which assiduities on his part I believe Mrs. Tompkyns was wholly unsuspecting. She said only she thought it must be better for Robert's health that he should not be continually in that horrid city.

But that day when I found him putting bullets into the bark of a cherished gatalpa, he had avowed himself. "By God!" he had said, the sweat standing thick on his forehead, "I'll find him yet."

"You do yourself and her a cruel injustice," I had answered and passed on. For though I could not deny that there was something I did not think what he thought.

And then the whole pitiful thing came out. It was just upon midnight when Bradley precipitated herself into my room. "Please, ma'am, come," she panted, "come or she'll get her death. I did all I could, but she would go out."

The girl had commanded or cajoled a dog-cart out of the stables and I drove back post-haste with her. Arrived we made a feint of entering by a side door, leaving the groom in the drive. "This way," she whispered, "it's a short cut to the quadrangle. And whatever will the master say?"

The moon was making of the world a giant monotone. We could see our way clearly, though at intervals we were plunged in the profoundest shade. Not a sound stirred beyond the crunching of the gravel under our feet and the brush and snap of twigs as we pushed past.

The quadrangle was a flood of light. In that white flood like a drowned thing Mrs. Tompkyns lay—prone at the statue's feet. She wore but a thin robe, a robe designed for warm luxurious rooms, and she lay with her fragile limbs in the wet frost-crisping grass.

One wasted arm was flung about the marble feet. From time to time she kissed them. "When I am dead, dear," she whispered as though someone had been there, "shall I see you? Are you in the world where I am going?"

I anathematised him for a selfish brute, whosoever he might be. But I doubted that he had been there that evening. He would scarcely have left her in such plight. We got her away. She was weak and light. It was easy to loose her clinging hands. As we bore her

upstairs, treading softly, for scandal has sensitive ears, we met Tompkyns coming down. His eyes were bloodshot. He was dressed for walking; he held a revolver in one hand.

At sight of us he started. "Good Heavens, what is it? Is she hurt?"

"Mistress was delirious, sir, and wandered in her sleep," the faithful Bradley said.

"You are a liar," he thundered, "and if I find you've been deceiving me, you shall go before morning."

Bradley tossed her head and muttered. But she dared not speak.

Mrs. Tompkyns died that night. She regained consciousness for that moment only in which she lost it for ever. Her face became illumined, her soul leapt out through her eyes. "Now I am coming," she cried, and died.

Perhaps, after all, I reflected, the man is dead and she was but keeping a memory green.

But the secret did not die with her.

Two mornings later Tompkyns strode into my room. In his hand was an envelope. He laid it before me. On it was written in his wife's hand, the tremulous hand of her latter days:

*Dear Robert, it is something I have loved, something that has been the most to me in my short life. Put it on my heart, dear, and bury it with me. Oh, I shall sleep so quietly.*

"I would not open it without a witness," he said, taking up the envelope again.

"You should not open it at all."

He laughed, a short, harsh laugh. His bloodshot eyes seemed starting from his head. "Then I might pass him in the street, or even sit at meat with him," he said.

He tore it open. A photograph fell out. I recognised it in a moment. He scanned it closely, impressing the features on his memory, I thought. For some minutes his fury blinded him. Then his face limned the changes from rage, jealousy, revenge, to absolute bewilderment. He flung it down and burst into a fit of baffled laughter. "What does it mean?" he gasped.

I knew the classic head at a glance. I remembered how a former glimpse of it had set me pitting it against Tompkyns. But I was not prepared for that which turned out. The portrait was a portrait

of the marble Antinous of the quad-range.

It was faded and worn with the cling and moisture of a thousand kisses. It was moulded and curved by the warmth of her bosom and cheek. There were circles where tears that had rained from her eyes had fallen on it. About it clung tenderly and like a long caress a strand of her beautiful hair. Out of its envelope

a shower of sad-scented rose-petals dropped, tied to it by a ribbon was a knot of love-notes—love-notes bearing that superscription "*To my Dearest.*"

"What does it mean?" he whispered, his face as white in the dawning of the mystery as hers at home.

"It means nothing, my friend," I said, as well as I was able. "Nothing but another woman's broken heart!"

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### "THE WIDOWED HEART."

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I SIT in the flickering firelight,  
 Soft shadows round me fall;  
 The silence is strangely tender  
 That fills my hearth and hall;  
 It seems like a winged spirit  
 Soothing my heart of pain,  
 Then I start and almost fancy  
 I hear thy voice again.  
 The quiet dark steals o'er the land,  
 The wind is half a moan,  
 You sleep on the lonely hill-side,  
 And I am here alone.  
 I leave my windows unshuttered,  
 You always loved the light,  
 How can I shut in this brightness  
 When you are in the night?  
 With only the storm-toss'd billows  
 Singing thy requiem hymn,  
 Whilst silent stars from their awful height  
 Watch when the light grows dim.  
 You have slipped from my fond embrace,  
 Who found earth's dearest bliss  
 In these ready arms to shelter  
 With love and tender kiss;  
 You have passed beyond earth's voices,  
 Beyond the hand that clings,  
 If I called you would not answer,  
 Nor list to earthly things.  
 O! could I but rise and follow  
 To yon still, mystic shore,  
 For, alas! my arms are empty—  
 Empty for evermore.

S. LOUIE ROWED.

# *Some Experiences of Lord Syfret*

WRITTEN BY ARABELLA KENEALY

## *AN OGRE IN TWEEDS*

ILLUSTRATED BY R. SAVAGE

### CHAPTER I.

**I** WAS visiting my friend Lord Townricarde. He has a pretty place on the Fife coast, where I had long promised to spend a few weeks with him. One of his girls was a god-child of mine, and some trouble had arisen about a love affair.

Temple of the Guards had been for two years dancing attendance on her, buffeted during those years between the Scylla of her smiles and the Charybdis of her discontent. She would not take another man, yet would she not take him. "The deuce is in the girl," her father wrote. "For Heaven's sake come and preach sense to her. Temple's a first-rate chap in every way, and, as I tell her, I can't spare her more than a few thousands. She seems to think she can pick and choose as though she were an heiress. And she isn't a beauty either. She has the unfortunate O'Brien nose."

I knew the O'Brien nose. Lady Townricarde had been an O'Brien. I sighed remembering it. I glanced toward a crayon drawing over my mantelpiece. What a nose I had once thought it, with its delicate tip-tiltedness. Scorn, laughter, roguery, tears, it limned according to the angle whereunto the mood of its possessor lifted or depressed it.

And her widower called it the "unfortunate O'Brien nose." Dear nose; small wonder that it and the impressionable sensitiveness it symbolised lay now tip-tilted in waxen immobility beneath the daisies, while its ravishing curves remain unrecorded, artists having been instructed in every other portrait than that belonging to me to give it as Roman a sweep as was compatible with likeness, in order that the Townricarde prestige might lose nothing in the Townricarde

picture-gallery. So Nancy O'Brien passes down to posterity with a half-inch bridge of dignity between her dark laughter-lurking pools of eyes.

Gladys received me in the drawing-room. Her father was right: she was not a beauty, though had I been a younger man, or one about to marry, I should not have quarrelled with her face. She smiled sedately, presenting her cheek. "It would be most illogical for you to join the league against me, sir," she said, "being as you are a crystallised old bachelor."

"Good Heavens," I protested, "if you do not wish to marry Temple, I should be the last man in the world to counsel your doing so."

She put her hand through my arm. "Thank you," she said gratefully. "I do not wish to marry anybody. Perhaps when I do—if I ever do," she added whimsically, "perhaps Colonel Temple might be the man."

Temple came next morning. I had asked that he should be present during part at least of my stay. I had not seen them together. But after the confession she had made I imagined things would arrange themselves satisfactorily. I drove with Townricarde to the station to meet him. He had always seemed to me a man of whom a woman might be fond, but in these matters women, to quote a Scottish friend of mine, are exceeding "kittle-cattle." Perhaps he struck me as being especially personable that morning by contrast with another friend of my host's, who came in by the same train, a man against whom I conceived a strong aversion the moment I set eyes on him. Since the preponderance of women relieved the other sex of the obligation to woo, masculine beauty has



so far declined that we have ceased to look for it, but this man exceeded the limits of average ugliness and bordered upon the absolutely repulsive. He was immense in height and girth and massive of muscle, facts which gave a certain aggressiveness to his ill-looks.

"My friend, Major Yeo," Townricarde introduced him, leaving us to walk together while he went ahead with Temple.

Depend on it, Temple will be all right, I reflected, my eye on his soldierly stride and handsome proportions. Gladys has hesitated! Knowing her father it occurred to me that Yeo had possibly been invited in the capacity of foil, though in relation with Temple a man many degrees less prepossessing would have served. Then I forgot his ugliness hearing him talk. He was a brilliant conversationist, flashing a keen and caustic humour over all topics, giving one almost the impression that his big brain was surfaced with a fine steel polish.

The men had travelled by the night train, and on reaching the house went straight to their rooms for a wash and change.

In the meantime I repaired to the verandah, taking with me an evening paper one of them had brought. On the verandah I found Gladys and a younger sister, their pretty heads together over a book.

"O, don't interrupt us," they cried in a breathless couplet, "we are right in the midst of the loveliest murder. He is just seizing hold of her by her lovely golden hair."

"Thank Heaven, then I can read my paper undisturbed while he cuts her lovely lily throat, and the hero or some other equally guiltless person gets arrested for his pains," I retorted, and retired to an opposite corner.

There were interesting items in my *St. James's* and I was soon engrossed. Then, suddenly, I heard a laugh—a quick sharp ripple—as suddenly caught in a girl's throat. I looked up.

"Good Lord!" I ejaculated. Yeo was standing like some giant apparition in the centre of the verandah staring straight before him over the moorland. Facing me, their eyes on him, the girls sat, in attitudes of startled astonishment, the murder-book clutched spasmodically in a hand of each. The cheeks of Gladys as I looked crimsoned over

with painful shame—for the laughter had been hers.

It was a mortifying situation. But I myself could scarcely keep my gravity in view of Yeo.

He had changed to a blue serge suit of the jauntiest, flimsiest cut. About his huge middle a narrow belt of stuff was buttoned—sorely against its will, for the serge had stretched to a mere rag with the strain of meeting. On his big heavy-brained head was set askew a white straw hat, a sailor hat many sizes too small for him and bound with a blue ribbon. His nether garments stopping short at the knees revealed an unparalleled pair of calves and ankles encircled with yellow-ringed worsted stockings. The man was grotesque, absurd! Small wonder that the girl—snatched suddenly from her absorption in blood-curdling crime to this vision of buffoonery—had been betrayed into laughter.

The thing in itself was a comedy. But the horrible mortification of the Major's face transformed it straightway into something more like tragedy.

I started forward, meaning to cover embarrassment by speech, but before I could reach him he had passed rapidly down the steps and disappeared in the garden.

Gladys let her book fall to the ground. She hid her flushed face in her hands. "O, I am so ashamed," she cried. "I am ready to die of shame. How could I have done such a horrible, vulgar thing!"

But Effie assumed a different standpoint. She had kept her countenance before, but now broke into a laugh. "It served him right," she insisted. "He should not have made himself so ridiculous. Did you see that funny little girdle round his waist? And his dear ridiculous little hat stuck on one side of his dear little head?"

"Hush, hush," Gladys admonished her. "He may be coming back. O, what a horrible thing to happen. I was lost in the book, and suddenly looked up."

"Who is he?" queried Effie.

"Major Yeo, a friend of your father's," I told her.

"Why didn't father dress him properly?" she cried indignantly. "He had no right to bring such an object here, without preparing us. I wonder he didn't come in tights and spangles, but I suppose he is reserving those for dinner."



"SUDDENLY I HEARD A LAUGH"

"He is a very clever man," I excused him. "You will not find him ridiculous when you know him."

But Effie had no ears for reason. "Good gracious!" she bubbled over. "Do you think he has a wardrobe of surprises like that? It will be rather

entertaining, you know. I shall go and look through his things in advance, and warn you what he intends wearing, so that we may not be taken again at a disadvantage. Why don't you laugh, Gladys?"

But Gladys had no more laughter in her.

## CHAPTER II.

IT has been said that no good woman understands dress. The term "good woman" needs to be defined before the proposition can be stated. If Mrs. Grundy herself—as she leads me to suspect—be the only member of her sex embraced by that definition—or by anything or anybody else—then is the proposition demonstrated. Mrs. Grundy is lamentably lacking in the science of clothes. However this may be, I have certainly known men otherwise unpugnable who have been a signal discredit to the art of tailoring.

Yeo was one of these. Though I never after saw him in that suit—which he straightway discarded—I have rarely seen him decently dressed, save in the evening when custom left him no alternative. Otherwise his choice of clothes was little less than criminal, or if Mrs. Grundy's bonnet may be fitted to his sex, something more than saintly! For pattern he indulged in checks of chess-board dimension or stripes of zebra-like exaggeration. For colour his weakness was such that he had no heart to prefer one before another, but chose stuffs amalgamating all. It has annoyed me many a time since to remember that I might have added to my stock of curious information the name of Yeo's tailor, whereas I am still in ignorance as to whence such grotesques may be obtained. The poor man, I believe, was striving to divert attention from his unfortunate appearance by that which he conceived to be a unique and elaborate taste in dress.

I was present in the drawing-room when Townricarde introduced him to the girls. He had changed into a Harris tweed, wherein his large unwieldy bulk lost nothing of size or unwieldiness, but stopped short of being ludicrous.

"We have already met," he insisted with a bitter meaning in his voice, bowing to Gladys.

Her face crimsoned. Her looks dropped guiltily before his fierce mortification.

I saw Temple glance from the one to the other in surprise. "I thought you had not met my girls," Townricarde said.

But Effie broke in sedately: "Major Yeo only means that he flitted like a vision across the verandah when Gladys and I were laughing over a comical book."

Yeo presented her with a blood-red volume. "I picked it up as I came back into the house," he said punctiliously, adding with emphasis: "From the title and a superficial inspection, one would not suspect it of being humorous."

"One should not judge by externals," Effie retorted.

"It is a maxim I have reason to uphold," was his caustic rejoinder.

Gladys flushed guiltily again. She lifted her eyes to his with a sudden pleading abasement. His glance rested on her face with interest. He swept her fine figure and charming looks. He was curiously heavy-lidded. That and a certain torpid cruelty of expression set me thinking of a snake.

"Poor Yeo certainly can't be called a beauty," Temple responded to my remarks, "but he seems to be a good fellow." This is what Temple himself was essentially, and as I have noticed in other men of that sort, by virtue of the quality, he imagined most of his acquaintance to possess it.

For my part it was the last qualification I should have applied to Yeo. Eminently capable, rapid-witted and virile, I should assuredly have admitted him as being, but not the other thing.

"Can't help being sorry for him," Temple continued. "He's so morbidly sensitive about his looks. Some girl treated him badly—threw him over for a handsome chap—he was awfully hard hit. I am told he has never been the same since."

"His parents ought certainly to be ashamed of themselves," I said. "If they in collaboration had perpetrated a book

or a picture of the calibre of this son of theirs, they would have been locked up."

Temple smiled.

"I am perfectly serious," I insisted.

He smiled again. "That is what gives your jokes such point, sir," he said.

After a pause—"Poor Gladys was quite cut up when I told her about it——" he resumed.

"O, you told Gladys."

"Yes, I thought she would have cried.

She has such a heart, Gladys has. She said it was the most pathetic thing she had heard. I never knew her to use strong language before, but she insisted that the girl who treated him so badly ought to have been hanged, or something of that sort. Dear girl!" He puffed at his cigar.

"That was the reason she was so nice to him all last evening. Quite pretty to see her talking to him, wasn't it?"

"O, quite," I said. After reflection I inquired: "How long is he stopping?"

"Yeo? O, I don't know. He seems to be enjoying himself."

"And you?"

"I always enjoy myself here," he said hopefully.

Gladys had not to all appearance exhausted her indignation against the fickle breaker of Yeo's heart, or it may be her sympathy with him, for she continued to be what Temple termed "so nice" to him to the exclusion of Temple himself.

"I can't think how he managed the thing," the Colonel confided to me, "although he's such a clever chap. To beat Gladys by four holes up, and she such a ripping player and he only learning—it's amazing."

I had seen the method of it, having walked round with them, so that the victory did not appear so amazing to me.

"You dare say a word," she had menaced me after sending only a few yards a ball she was capable of driving some hundreds. "Major Yeo is so sensitive," she had added diffidently, "it disheartens him to lose."

I glanced at his burly frame striding some paces in advance. "He scarcely looks a subject for cotton-wool wrappings," I demurred.

"Perhaps you think that because he



"HE SCARCELY LOOKS A SUBJECT FOR COTTON-WOOL WRAPPINGS"

is not very good-looking he has no heart," she observed with a little defiant air, that reminded me of her mother. "He has a very sad story—very, very sad," she said, glancing after him.

I watched her through the game, till the end, when her mistaken quixotism reached its climax; seeing the balm of victory soothe his excoriated vanity. I began to watch her closely and with some misgiving. Heavens! what will-o'-the-wisp fatuity fermented in her brain?

The man had some power over her.



She grew to flush and tremble at his approach. She lost her bright manner and speech. She seemed for ever afraid of hurting him, for ever entreating pardon for her offence against him. Her remorse for that offence was a weak spot in her armour, her passion to make amends a lever whereby he moved her, and of these he did not scruple to make use. Day by day he further dominated her, day by day she resisted less. The snake-like impression I had of him was strengthened. He consciously and intentionally magnetised her. He was fond of her, I suppose, after a fashion, but it was a fashion, for the most part cruelty. Townricarde in his opinionated way scoffed at my fears. He did not hesitate to characterise them unflatteringly.

"No girl," he insisted, "would care for an ugly brute like Yeo. Why you yourself told me she laughed at him."

I had not suggested that she cared. There were fear and aversion in her face when he approached her, but there were pity also and appeal and dangerous surrender.

Temple saw it, and grew perplexed. "Why is Gladys so much with that brute?" he once observed. "He has a shocking record. Her father had no right to bring him here."

"Can't you rid us of him, somehow?" I urged.

He looked up apprehensively. "Good God, you are not afraid—" he broke out. "She couldn't care for a brute like that."

Certainly it seemed incredible. Yeo stayed on. Townricarde was as pig-headed as he was obtuse, and the man cajoled him and deceived him with all his rare powers of deceit and cajollery.

Things came to a climax at the end of three weeks. Yeo's and Temple's visits were to terminate next day. I had begun to hope. I was confident that, once removed from the dominant spell of his personality and the pitfall of her innocent offence against him, she would see him in all his repulsiveness—for he grew no less repulsive on further acquaintance.

He and she had repaired after breakfast to the library. Thither I followed them. I was determined not to give him an opportunity of a farewell *l'été-d'été*.

As I entered he levelled one swift

insolent look at me, but taking a book I withdrew to the further end of the room.

They had been chatting some time, when suddenly he dropped his voice, and his words, which before I had failed to hear, now reached me. "I have only loved two women," he was saying, his heavy-lidded eyes on her face. "One of them to whom I was engaged jilted me for another man, because of my ugliness. The second," he spoke slowly and impressively, "ridiculed me openly for the same reason."

He paused. She had broken into a sobbing cry, as though he had struck her. She stretched a trembling hand out. "She ought to have been whipped," I heard her falter, "but she did not know you."

"Know me," he echoed bitterly. "That makes little difference to a woman. Your sex, Miss Haldane, prefers a straight-nosed, pink-skinned doll before a man of brains and character who has the misfortune to be plain. Do not trouble to inform me that I have not the conformation of an ogre. God knows! I have reason enough to be aware of it."

I could not hear her answer, but I heard her tones, compassionate, impulsive, healing. The room was long, and one judging from appearances would not have supposed that, at the distance they sat from me, their words would have been audible. But the ceiling was dome-shaped, and the hollow caught and amplified their voices, bringing the conversation to me with harsh distinctness. I had no scruple in listening. The man was dangerous, corrupt. It is a supererogation of punctiliousness to wash hands before closing with a sooty foe.

"I do not contend to virtue, either," he continued with a kind of purring rasp in his voice. "My face in the glass is enough to nip any wretch's morning aspirations. I have been consistent. I am as bad as I look. I am candid with you, you see. You cannot expect a broken-nosed person like me to walk straight," he ended with a horrid laugh.

She started up. She put out a hand as one blind feeling her way. "O, I cannot bear it," she cried. "Somebody must help you. Somebody should be with you to show you how mistaken you are, how little your appearance would matter to one who cared for you."

He was silent. They seemed to have

forgotten me. I sat apparently lost in my book, in reality observing them from beneath its lower edge. His low-lidded eyes swept her face. A flash of triumph passed over his uncouth features. But he put a strong control upon himself. He shook his head hopelessly. "It might have been," he said. "It is too late now. I have lived too long with my own hideousness to have any self-respect or ideals left. Once——"

She faltered toward him. She drew back. Then she faltered again toward him. She put a hand on his arm. "It is never too late," she insisted. "And I do not believe what you say. If you were not ever so much more good than bad, you would not feel so bitterly any wrong you may have done. It is cruel — O, it is cruel——"

He finished the sentence for her. "For a man to be so plain," he said bitterly.

She looked into his face. "Yes," she said simply, "for a man so clever and strong and—sensitive as you."

A rage of candour or an indecency of revelation seized him. "If I am what I look," he burst out with his repulsive laugh, "if all my brutality of face is only the expression of brutality of nature, if I have indulged in the worst vices, if I am capable of the vilest crimes—my face leading me——"

There was no faltering in her now. Her face was irradiate, her step firm. She rose and moved swiftly to him. She laid her two hands on his shoulders, and stood so, looking up into his odious face. "If I could help you?" she said.

"How could you help me?" he cried harshly.

I thought for the first time there was compunction in his voice.

"I could help you," she said firmly. "I admire your intellect and your strength. I am very, very sorry—I could make you respect yourself for all the power and cleverness there are in you. I could——" she suppressed a little shuddering cry, "perhaps I could love you," she faltered.

He stood looking down upon her



"SHE STARTED UP"

bowed head, that white heat of triumph in his face. He had possibly some affection for her. It was not all vanity that stirred him. He put an arm about her. With a cry she tore herself away. She stood at a distance from him, holding out a hand of avoidance. "O, I do not love you—yet," she cried breathlessly.

He broke into a scoffing laugh. "No.

nor ever will," he retorted, turning violently on his heel.

She hesitated one moment. Then she followed and caught up with him before he reached the door. She laid an arm about his throat, she laid her cheek against his shoulder.

"I will, I do," she said gently. "You shall never again go alone through life

with—with only your poor ugliness." He was about to kiss her, when I coughed. I walked down the room to where they stood, together. "Really, Major Yeo!" I said with undisguised disfavour.

"Really, Lord Syfret!" he retorted, with admirable insolence, adding with a bow and a laugh, "One might suppose you feel somewhat *de trop*."

### CHAPTER III.

Now whether Yeo loved her after that fashion of his which was more than two-thirds cruelty, or whether it was merely a sop to his galled vanity to carry a siege which Temple, famous for fine looks, fine character, and fine possessions, had vainly attempted two whole years, I cannot say.

I thought the Colonel would have blown his brains out when he knew. "She could never marry him. Good Heavens! how can a girl like her marry him?" he raved. "He is as big a brute as he looks."

"What could I do," Gladys pleaded to me. "I laughed at him. I wounded him. You heard me laugh."

"Pooh," I insisted, "an accident, a trifling error. Are you to sacrifice your life to such an indiscretion?"

"Everything is against him," she insisted. "I can help him. I can save him from himself. He will throw away his life——"

"He is bad, and a cad," I urged, "or he would never have used his ugliness and vices to compel you as he has done. And why should you pity him rather than Temple?"

She broke out crying. "It is fate," she wailed. "O, it is no good talking. I cannot help myself."

"Take Temple," I said. "He will only be too happy to help you."

"No, no," she sobbed, "he is handsome, and fortunate, and good—he has no need of me."

"No need, poor wretch; hasn't he shown his need faithfully and sufficiently these two years?" The two men were at this moment approaching from opposite sides of the garden. I saw her eyes glance from one to the other. The fear I had before seen passed into her face as she turned from Temple's fine personality to the hideousness of his rival. Before they had reached the verandah, she had fled.

Though things had gone so far, I believe she might even then have been saved had Townricarde not acted like a fool.

"For goodness' sake," I enjoined him, "go carefully, or you will fling her irrevocably into the brute's arms."

But nothing gives a man so much self-confidence as does his own pig-headedness. "My dear Syfret," he returned complacently, "Yeo leaves to-morrow, and I shall forbid her to see him again."

Next morning after breakfast I was summoned to the library. Outside the door, her fingers trembling about the handle, Gladys stood.

"It has come," she faltered, "and I cannot help myself, it is fate—it is fate!"

I took her hand, and together we went in.

Townricarde stood at one end of the hearthrug, gesticulating violently. At the other end, self-possessed, resolute and towering above him stood Yeo. "Your daughter shall speak for herself," he was saying, as we entered: "I will take no other answer."

"Speak for yourself, Gladys," her father insisted. "Send this man away. He has the insolence to tell me you have chosen him—a person you have known less than three weeks—for husband."

The Major folded his arms across his chest, and stood in a Napoleonic attitude, gloomy, deserted, forbearing. I could have kicked him for his tragic airs. I saw her look toward him helplessly. I saw the fear and weakness in her face.

"It is unfair," I protested. "We must give her time. Major Yeo will not take advantage of a girl's impulse——"

"She shall speak now or never," her father thundered. "Major Yeo leaves for London by the mid-day train."

The Major bowed. He took out his watch and consulted it. "That gives a clear hour for her—having already



"CAUGHT HIM UP BEFORE HE REACHED THE DOOR"

pledged herself—to speak," he said, adding brutally, "and for me to pack."

Ninety-nine women out of a hundred have a fibre which responds to savagery. It is a remnant of the squaw, the echo of an age wherein nature, making for physical fitness, fashioned woman in such wise that she should choose her mate in the red-handed victor. Gladys was the hundredth woman, however, and she distinguished between savagery and strength. She recoiled from the coarseness of his attitude and speech. She looked him unwaveringly in the face. It was a moment of advantage.

But Townricarde lost it by intemperate

action. He cast by his control, and starting forward shook a powerless fist in Yeo's face.

"You are a scoundrel, sir," he cried.

Yeo remained calm and dignified. "You take advantage of my position as your guest and of your daughter's presence to insult me," he submitted with admirable self-control.

Before I could prevent him, Townricarde crossed the room, and had rung the bell. "Major Yeo is leaving by the half-past one train," he said when the butler appeared. "See that the dog-cart is round."

The man swept our faces with a shrewd



respectful glance. "Will Major Yeo take lunch, my lord?"

"No," his lordship thundered.

"Father," Gladys put in, in a low voice, "you forget you have not invited Major Yeo."

"I have not asked him to lunch here, because I do not mean that he shall," her father burst out violently.

The butler closed the door respectfully behind him. The Major stood a minute. Then he turned, bowed, and walked down the room. I confess I was sorry for him at that moment, well as we were rid of him. It was a moment to humiliate the most audacious.

However, he was a man whose misfortunes stood him in good stead. As he went, mute, erect and dignified, he stumbled suddenly against a footstool and, tripping, fell headlong. He was quickly on his feet again, but in rising turned on us such a face of rage, mortifi-

cation and pitiful ugliness that Gladys with a low cry ran down the room to him. She put a detaining hand on his arm. She turned her face and streaming eyes.

"Father," she cried, "if you send Major Yeo away, I shall go with him."

• • • • •

They had not been married three months before her heart was broken. In less than twelve she had suffered an inordinately bitter punishment for that unwitting laugh of hers, had learned the lesson that the reclamation of a brute is no such light achievement, and further, that one pays in this round hollow world of ours more grievously for sins of judgment than one does for cold-blooded crimes. However, in that time she had carried these flint-stone facts, her broken heart, and a little dead, ugly-faced baby with her to the grave.

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## FIRST LOVE

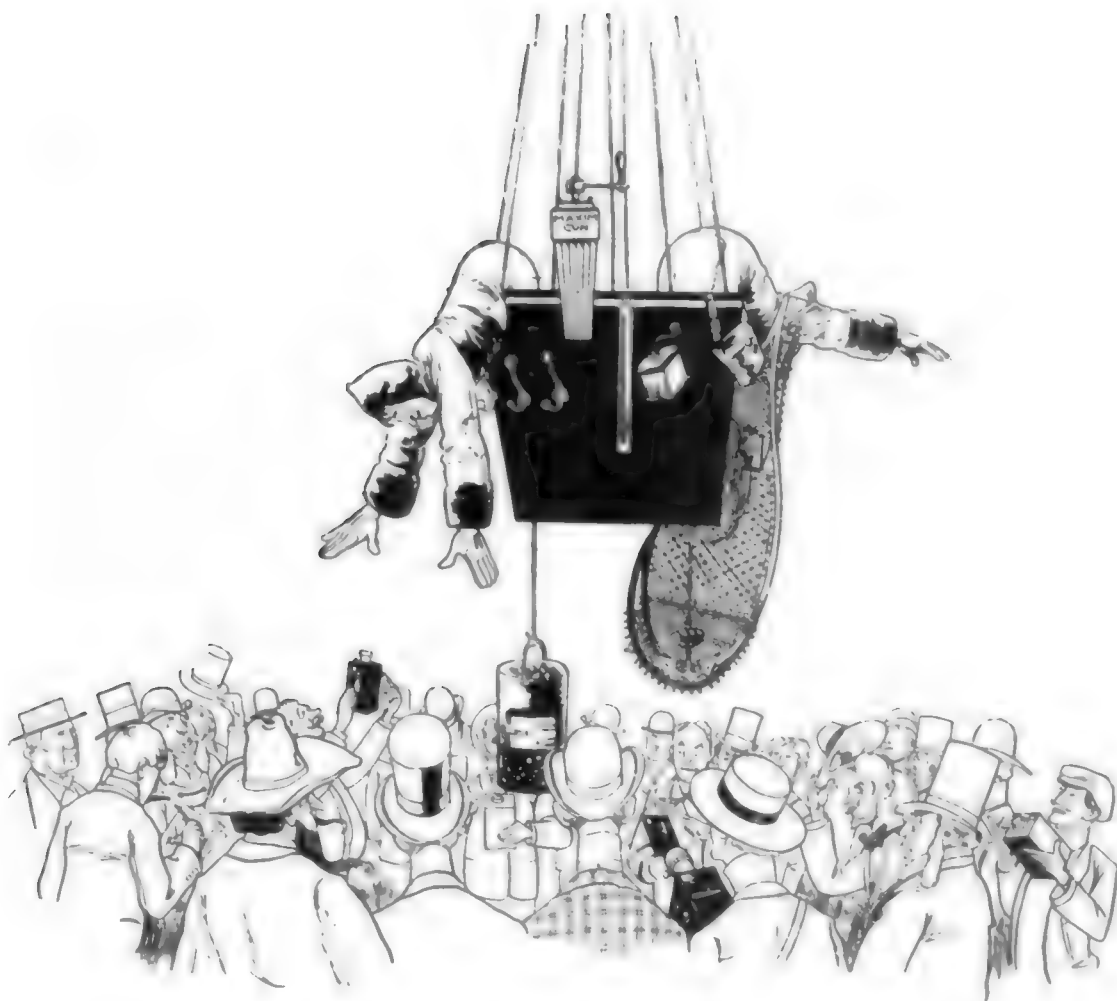
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OUTSIDE my open door this misty dawn,  
While throistles pipe upon the budding bough  
And dewdrops glisten on the greening lawn,  
I wait the coming of my darling now.

The sweet old garden, wet with April showers,  
The daisied, pearly path across the grass,  
Flanked by the golden dandelion flowers,  
Await the coming of my own dear lass.

Listen! the clear click of the rising latch!  
Soon shall I feel upon my lips her kiss;  
The pairing swallows twitter 'neath the thatch . . .  
Ah, God! there never was a spring like this!

THOMAS MCEWEN.



"AN EMOTIONAL CROWD WITNESSED THE DEPARTURE"

## *The Muggsenn Expedition.*

WRITTEN BY EDEN PHILLPOTTS      ILLUSTRATED BY RENE BULL

"CHRISTIAN," said Professor Frithiof Muggsenn to his valet, "I am going to the North Pole in my balloon, the *Pram*."

"Very well, I will put the reindeer under-garments to the fire, and have the snow shoes re-soled," said Christian.

There was no emotion, no flutter. Christian knew his master.

"We depart at half-past four to-morrow from the Beer Gardens. I have arranged for eighty per cent. of the gate money—if we return. You will in the course of the day purchase a second-hand Maxim gun, a coffee-grinder, a thermometer, and a small-sized sheet anchor. Also pack the clothes-line. That will be all." The Professor waved his hand, indicating that the interview was at an end, and Christian vanished.

An emotional crowd witnessed Professor Muggsenn's departure. He counted the heads, a feat easy to one of his mathematical attainments, and doubly so from the nature of his bird's-eye position. The result was gratifying. A thousand kodaks flashed in the sunshine, and a rousing Norwegian cheer heralded the departure of the *Pram*.

"They will rend the welkin," said the Professor anxiously, "and then Heaven alone knows what may happen."

Meanwhile Christian got things into some order and comfort; but he could not restrain a manly tear when he recollected his last interview with the Professor on terra firma. The brave fellow had asked for an increase of salary or some proportion of the profits, but his master, with a laconic abruptness for which he

was celebrated, refused to discuss the question.

"We are now," said the Professor, "at an altitude of 50,000 feet above the earth. Yet, such is the clearness of the atmosphere, I can by the aid of this telescope already detect indications of a glacial period at no distant date. However," he added, "that does not concern us." Then his tone changed, and he asked with his customary curtness, "How's her head?"

Christian studied the thermometer, and answered: "Due north by east."

"That will do as well as anything else."

Night closed in, and the loneliness was quite exceptional. An occasional cloud enveloped the balloon.

Suddenly there was a crash, a roar, and a rattle. The man of science started from troubled slumber to find Christian playing on the Maxim gun like a barrel organ.

"What have you broken?" asked Professor Muggsenn.

"The silence!" answered Christian. It was a true example of Norwegian humour, and the *savant* laughed heartily.

Then both men slept, and the stars twinkled mysteriously out of the depths of the sky, while the *Pram* creaked and curvetted through infinite space.

The intrepid explorers were awakened some three or four weeks later by a peculiar sound, which appeared to proceed from the horizon.

"It is somebody sharpening a ham-knife," said Christian.

"Nay, foolish fellow," answered the Professor; "it is an Aurora Borealis."

The valet, who had never previously been so far north, was bound to take his master's word for it.

"We are now," continued the Professor, who had just taken an observation with the coffee-grinder, "almost exactly beneath the North Star."

"True, I see it exactly overhead," said Christian; "or rather," he added, correcting himself, "I should do so if it were not for the fact that it is broad daylight, and that the balloon interrupts my survey."

"Exactly! And if the North Star is just over our heads, what must be just beneath our feet?"

"I never guessed a riddle in my life," answered Christian.

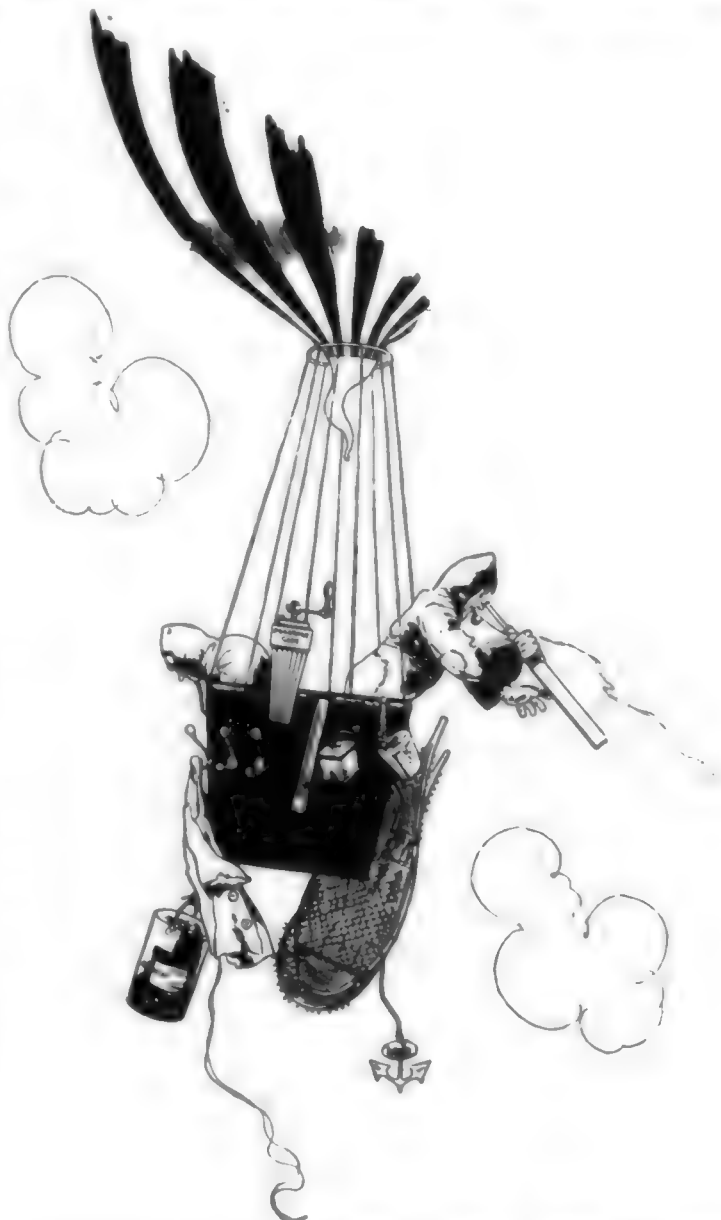
"Why, the North Pole," said Professor Muggsenn, triumphantly. Christian peered over the side of the car.

"Hush!" he said. "I see it!"

"What?" asked the Professor, calmly.

"The North Pole," whispered Christian, with his finger on his lips.

At that supreme moment both men kept perfectly cool. They could not



"I CAN BY THE AID OF THIS TELESCOPE ALREADY DETECT INDICATIONS OF A GLACIAL PERIOD"

help it. The thermometer indicated a temperature of numerous degrees below zero.

"What is it like?" asked the Pro-

fessor cut the polar air. In the icy fastnesses of that unutterable desolation, heard for the first time amidst those fantastic flocs and baleful bergs which



"CAST FORTH THE CLOTHES-LINE WITH ADMIRABLE DEXTERITY"

fessor, whose emotion now threatened to unman him.

"Like a piece of treacle-stick somebody's been sucking," answered Christian, whose forte was homely simile.

"'Tis thus, I pictured it in my dreams," answered his master. The revulsion of feeling brought a few hot tears to the old man's eyes. They froze as they fell, and a polar bear, passing by, thought it hailed.

Then a sudden and wholly unexpected burst of auroral light illumined the weird scene, and the clear accents of the

hem in the Northern Pole, there rang out the clarion voice of MAN!

"Get out the clothes-line!"

Christian saw his master's meaning.

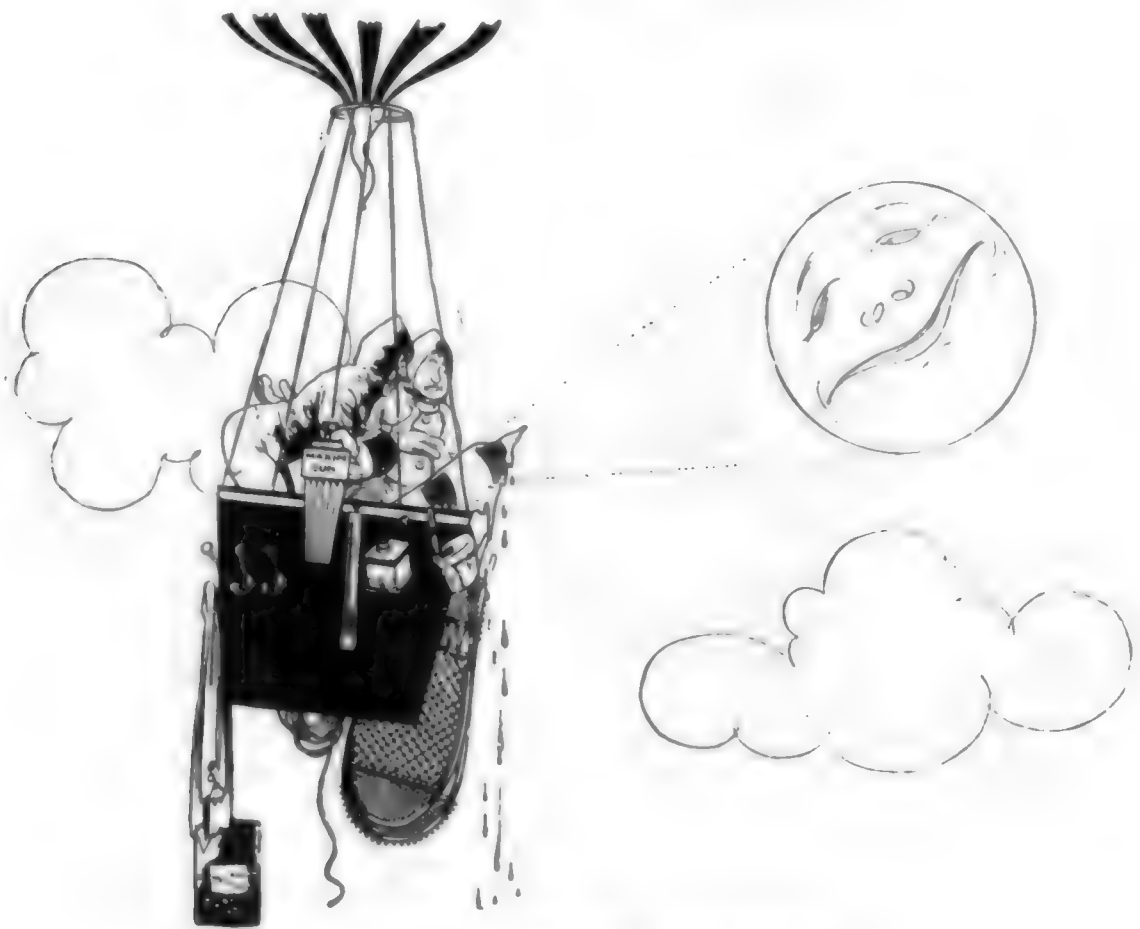
"You are going to take it away!"

The Professor nodded.





"THE PROFESSOR HAD CAPTURED THE POLE"



"RAPIDLY MELTING UNDER A HOT SUN"

"What genius!" thought Christian.

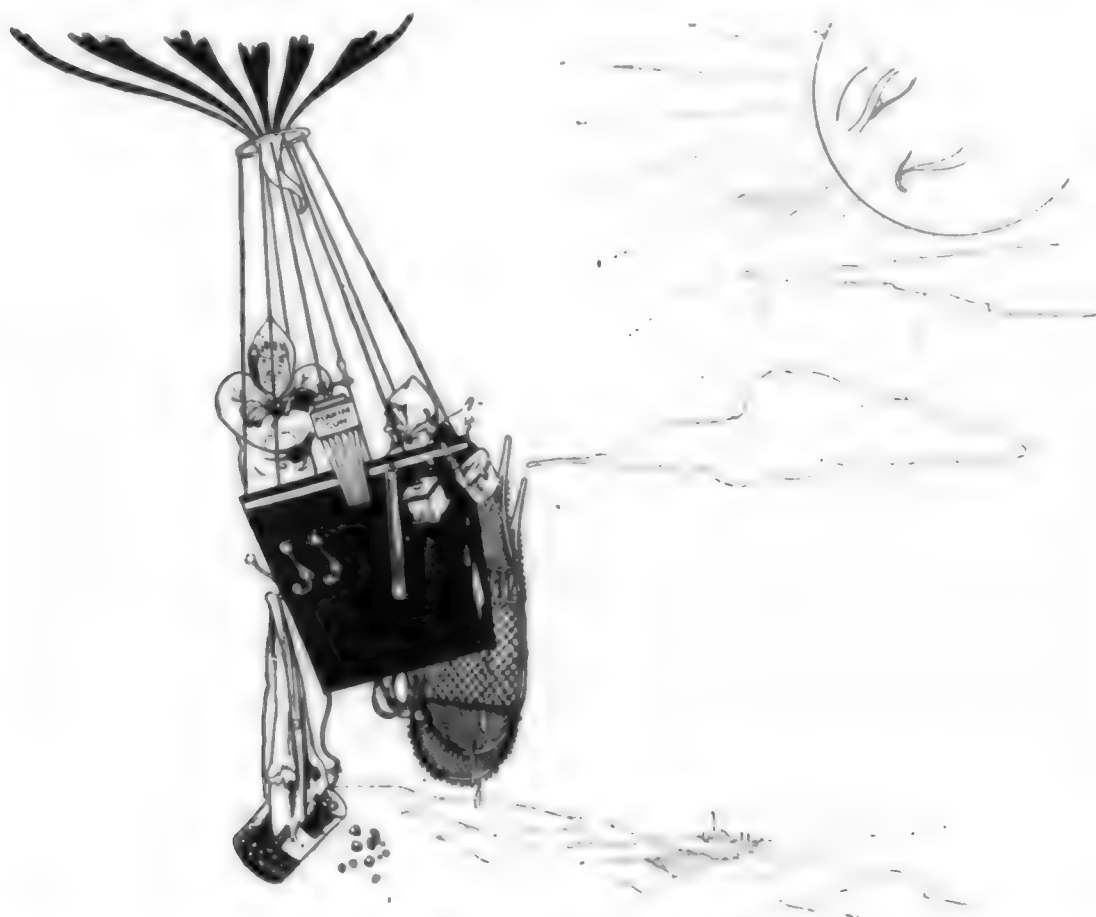
Then he cast forth the clothes-line with admirable dexterity.

"Heave ho!" cried the Professor.

There was a crash. The frustrated bergs gnashed their teeth; the frantic floes lashed the water into foam; the aurora crackled with indignation; while mock suns and other phenomena (each in its way unique, but all common to these remarkable latitudes) manifested themselves to the best of their ability. But what is blind Nature when pitted

which the *Pram* travelled few things of any importance occur. But the weather grew warmer as the balloon flew swiftly southward, and all too soon an event, the possibility of which had been strangely enough overlooked, became an accomplished fact.

It happened that, chipping a fragment off the North Pole to cool a brandy and soda, the Professor forgot to wrap the priceless relic up in a blanket afterwards according to his custom; and a couple of hours later, on turning to do so, his



"A MERE STUMP OF THE MAJESTIC CURIOSITY ALONE REMAINED"

against the skill and subtlety of Conscious Intelligence? Nothing. The Professor lighted his cigar, while all those untamed and indigenous curiosities which inhabit the extreme North raised their voices in a long and mournful yell of anguish. Why?

The Professor had captured the Pole, and in so doing removed from that inhospitable region its sole possession of any value.

• • •

The return journey was performed with an almost monotonous lack of incident, for in those high elevations at

horror was extreme at finding the fruit of his adventure rapidly melting under a hot sun.

Smothering a Norwegian imprecation, the startled man of science laboured to preserve the fast fleeting fragments of the North Pole; but alas! it was too late. A mere stump of the majestic curiosity alone remained, and Muggsenn, stung to rashness by his disappointing discovery, nearly fell backwards out of the balloon. With admirable presence of mind the valet, Christian, succeeded in catching the remains of the Pole as it dripped and streamed over the edge

of the car, and by his ready wit and forethought he thus saved for the unfortunate Professor at least two quarts of pure North Pole water.

"Even that will be a curiosity," said Christian; "and at least, by producing it, you can prove that your account of the Pole is true."

Professor Muggsenn permitted the indomitable valet to comfort him.

"True," he answered, "the water is better than nothing, and will fetch good money. I shall sell it at fifty guineas a half-pint for Royal christenings and kindred imposing functions. Unfortunately, it happens that pure water is a

thing little used at imposing functions; but we must do the best we can."

An hour later the fortunate discoverers cast forth their sheet-anchor, which by curious chance caught fast on a kiosk in the very Beer Gardens from whence they had originally started. Half-an-hour later the aeronauts entered a special train for the capital amid very general and enthusiastic expressions of good-will from the populace.

"Next year I go to the South Pole," said Professor Muggsenn. "I presume, Christian, my faithful fellow, that you will accompany that expedition?"

"I think not," said Christian."



"AT LEAST TWO QUARTS OF PURE NORTH POLE WATER"

# *Billy McCabe's Motor Car.*

WRITTEN BY LUKE SHARP. ILLUSTRATED BY RENÉ BULL.



GRATEFULLY to the disappointment of everybody interested in rapid road locomotion, the House of Commons failed to pass the Motor Car Bill. Many companies had been organised in Britain for the making of road locomotives, and now people wondered what was to become of these organisations, which were, as a usual thing, largely over-capitalised. It was said that the Commons would be sure to pass the Bill next Session, but the same remark had been made the Session before.

It was at this period that the eyes of the world became gradually turned on Billy McCabe, who was at first called the British Edison; though after a while people began to term Edison the American McCabe, which went to show that Billy was getting on in the world. Nobody was so much disappointed at the inaction of the House of Commons as Billy, and it is doubtful if anyone used more reprehensible language on the subject than he did. Billy was not the man to sit calmly under this injustice, and he held, quite sensibly, that it was ridiculous a country like Britain should have a law compelling a motor car to go at four miles an hour, preceded by a tired-looking man with a red flag.

Billy had invented a motor car himself on an entirely new principle, and he had been waiting patiently for the House of Commons to pass its motor car enactment so that he might float his company, and compete with the other organisations already in the field for the patronage of those who wished to run along the country roads as swiftly as if they were in a railway train. Billy's car differed from all others then in the market. It was extremely light, being made of a composition of steel and aluminium or something of that sort.

It did not depend for its motive power on either electricity or petroleum. It was simplicity itself. In a strong reservoir it generated the new acetylene gas, which is easily made by dropping a lozenge of carbide of calcium into a little water. Not being a practical chemist I am not quite certain the substance is carbide of calcium; it may be carbide of sodium, but anyhow it is carbide of something, and this substance can be made into little tablets which, when dissolved in water, produce the acetylene gas. There was a strong reservoir holding some water into which was dropped automatically lozenge after lozenge as the gas generated was used in the engine, and so pumped off into the empty air. Billy had a good deal of trouble at first with his motor car because he insisted on smoking while running it, and the acetylene gas being tremendously explosive, Billy found himself blown into the next parish on frequent occasions, so he was compelled to give up the use of tobacco while riding on his car. He thought at first of calling it the anti-tobacco motor and floating it as a company which would reform smokers, but finally he hit on an invention which allowed a man to smoke in comfort while he sat on the car. He concocted an arrangement by which the discharged gas, having done its work, passed through a box containing a soapy mixture, so that the gas came off in great bubbles and floated along by the roadside. This was the germ of his next marvellous warlike invention by means of which the gas enclosed itself in little globules that shot off into the air, floating in space for a while, and exploding with fearful force, when the bubble touched a tree or the earth. This device, as everybody knows, has changed modern warfare completely, just as Billy's car has changed modern locomotion. Edison came out, immediately after Billy's discovery was announced, and claimed that he had invented the

same thing twenty-five years ago; but Billy got his patents all right, and that is the main thing in a commercial and contentious world.

I was intimately acquainted with Billy, and I beg to state here that it is not true, as historians have asserted, that McCabe set out deliberately with his motor to defy the great British Empire.

excuse. He said it might be a great invention or it might not, but that he was defying the law by not having a man with a red flag in front of his motor. Billy explained that it was impossible to have the man there, because the motor was going at the rate of forty miles an hour, and few men unless they are in extremely good condition can cover that



"SO BILLY WAS CAUGHT BY A CONSTABLE"

Nothing was further from Billy's thoughts, he being a most peaceable citizen. He merely took out his motor to show the public how easily it might be guided through even crowded streets; but the law takes no account of good intentions, knowing, perhaps, to what purpose they are put in paving the lower regions. So Billy was caught by a constable out in Middlesex and haled before a magistrate. The magistrate would listen to no

distance in sixty minutes. The magistrate retorted that this made the case all the worse, for he was running at ten times the legal speed. Thereupon he fined Billy forty shillings and costs, and threatened to send the inventor to prison if ever he appeared before him again.

Angry as Billy had been before, he now became wild. He said he didn't mind the forty shillings fine or even the costs, but the contemptuous language of



the magistrate regarding his new motor car proved the last straw on the motor's aluminium back. Billy left the magistrate's presence without a stain on his character, but at the same time he swore loudly that he would let the British Empire know what it was to run up against a full-bodied motor car that would go forty miles an hour at ordinary speed or eighty miles if you hurried it. For two or three weeks nobody saw anything of Billy, and when he did come out they did not recognise his motor car. Then began his celebrated excursion trips to Scotland: there and back for three-pence. He started up through Middle-

People thought a cyclone was coming, and took to fields and forests. Various ineffectual attempts were made to stop Billy in his breaking of the law, but he went clear through to the north of Scotland, shattering a few hills in the Highlands with his bombs, merely to let them know he was in the neighbourhood. When Billy had got as far north as the roads go, he turned his car round and made back for London at simply incredible speed. The telegraph, which was quicker than an acetylene motor car, warned the authorities of its approach, but even though the yeomanry were called out they could do absolutely



"A THIN POLICEMAN ON A DERBY WINNER"

sex by the same road on which he had been arrested before, and now when the policeman endeavoured to stop him, they were compelled to get an ambulance and carry the officer to the nearest hospital. No one who had seen the motor car before would now have recognised it, for it was built like an iron-clad, covered with triple-plated nickel steel of his own invention, through which no bullet could penetrate, and it was surmounted by a conning-tower in which Billy himself sat and guided the machine. On approaching a town Billy would press a button and the machine would begin to fire out acetylene bombs that simply paralysed the whole neighbourhood.

nothing to stop Billy McCabe on his mad career.

The papers were now full of accounts of Billy Day by Day, and when he reached London there was a large and enthusiastic crowd awaiting him. A determined attempt was made by the London police to capture him, but Billy kept everybody at a respectable distance by playing a mild variety of acetylene bombs all round the neighbourhood. While the crowd and the police were being amused in this way, Billy seized the opportunity of collecting provisions for the return journey. McCabe's detractors have since alleged that he stole the necessities of life, but this is not true.

He was bound to have food, and the bomb display caused the shop-keepers to be away from home at the time Billy called to replenish his travelling larder. So Billy started north again, amidst general acclaim.

The Liberal papers were making it hot for the Government on Billy's account. They said he should be stopped at all

were partly right; but it was a mechanical revolution—eighty miles an hour at that.

The authorities in Lancashire telegraphed to the Home Secretary for instructions should Billy head for the coal-mining district. The Home Secretary replied that they were to read the Riot Act to him and not to hesitate to shoot.



"CALMLY SMOKED HIS PIPE"

risks. The prestige of the British Empire was at stake. Here was a wild Highlander who set the law at defiance, as doubtless his ancestors had done before him, and here was a supine Government, with the largest majority of the century, helpless as an infant in arms. The French papers said gleefully that here at last was a British revolution confronting a powerless Government. In this they

But Billy himself did the shooting. Before the Sheriff, standing on a barrel beside the highway, got his mouth in shape for saying the first word of the justly celebrated Act, McCabe shot by and was in the next county ere the troops had time to draw breath, let alone a sword or a gun. There is little practical use in reading the Riot Act, or even part of the latest novel, to a man going eighty miles an hour. Between Penrith and Carlisle they tried another plan, but it was equally unsuccessful. They mounted a thin policeman on the Derby winner of that year, kindly lent for the occasion, and gave him the Riot Act to read as he ran; but he lost sight

of Billy in about ten seconds, and did not have breath enough left with the jolting to begin the reading even.

Billy reached the far north once again in safety, stocked up some more carbide of calcium, turned his ironclad towards the tropics again, and pushed the motor button. Telegraphic messages announced that Billy was going to pass through the broadest part of Yorkshire this trip, and that noble county made a most creditable attempt to read the Riot Act to him, an attempt that would probably have succeeded had the county been a bit wider. The Sheriff placed a line of policemen down the road the motor car was to come, and gave each officer a printed slip containing a few words of the Riot Act, so arranged that each shouting where the man north of him left off, a verbal *feu de joie* ran the Riot Act across the county. The furthest north policeman had the first slip, the second the second, the third the third, the fourth the fourth, and so on to the boundary of the southernmost part. Each policeman was instructed to shout at the top of his voice as the motor car went by his part of the Riot Act, which never amounted to more than five words; but although the policemen bravely did their duty Billy dashed through Yorkshire and so on to London again.

Here Mr. Chamberlain threw off his coat and said he would resign his position in the Cabinet if this thing were not stopped. He mentioned with some feeling that Old Father Kruger had played a good deal with him some time before, but that this person McCabe was not to take that as a precedent and think that any Transvaal nonsense was to be tolerated on the free land of Britain. This move was received with great enthusiasm, and a Cabinet meeting was held, at which it was determined to capture McCabe at all costs. The Minister of War then called out the British Army, and by the time that was done McCabe and his motor car were speeding on his third trip to Scotland. The British Army was drawn across the island just on the London side of the Scottish Border (the island being somewhat narrow at that point), and with fixed bayonets they waited for McCabe and his machine. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when McCabe's ironclad motor appeared over the Scottish hills, and here for the first time the

young man caught sight of the British Army drawn up in a line to stop him. He paused at the top of the hill, and was seen to get out and oil his machine in sight of the British Army massing along the road, and it seemed to Viscount Wolseley that McCabe was foolish in allowing the troops to concentrate in this fashion. But Billy, on the top of the hill, merely lit his pipe, sat down on a mile-stone, and calmly smoked his pipe, taking care that there was no acetylene gas about. Having finished his smoke and knocked the ashes out of his pipe, he turned the machine half-way round and then gave the assembled soldiers an example of its powers. He fired off a few acetylene bombs at the next hill. The British Army thought an earthquake had taken place. The hill disappeared in fine dust. The Army was appalled to notice that he turned the motor car towards themselves and went inside. The machine with a roar descended upon them, looking like the Crystal Palace on Thursday night running away with all the fireworks going. The Commander-in-Chief on horseback did his best to rally the men. They said they were ready to fight almost anything, but they were not going to stand up to what was evidently a section of the infernal regions let loose, so the army broke and made for cover, while Billy triumphantly tore through the space left by the rapidly retreating soldiers.

London was sent into a panic by the glaring contents bills of the evening newspapers which came out with special editions showing how McCabe had put the British Army to rout, and was now tearing his irresistible way up to London, while the great City lay defenceless before him. A panic-stricken, threatening crowd surrounded St. Stephen's. A Cabinet Council hastily convened, and Mr. Balfour came to the rescue. He made some pleasant remarks on the success of Mr. Chamberlain's methods in South Africa and other parts of the world, but thought sometimes they did not work as well as they might in an enlightened country like Britain. He therefore proposed that they should forthwith pass the Motor Car Bill, and then Mr. Billy McCabe would be quite within his rights in his interesting Scottish trips. This way out of the difficulty, which had occurred to no one else, was received with cheers.

Parliament being in Session immediately rushed through the Motor Car Bill about as quickly as McCabe was now coming upon London, and the Lords with equal haste gave their assent, so that by the time Billy McCabe approached Highgate Hill the Motor Car Bill was law.

Billy was received in London with great acclamation. The Lord Mayor gave him a banquet at the Mansion House, and voluntarily offered to become chairman of the new McCabe Acetylene Motor Car Company, capital £25,000,000.

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### THE KING OF FAERY.

I AM the King of Faëry:  
 A thousand years ago  
 My elfin mother bore me  
 Betwixt the snow and snow—  
 My elfin mother bore me,  
 Lightly as elfins may,  
 To rule a doubtful country  
 Between the night and day.

I am the King of Faëry,  
 And wise I am and o'd,  
 And of my fairy wisdom  
 A thousand hands take hold.  
 But those that seek my helping  
 Are glad—for all their care:  
 My thousand years of wisdom  
 Lie dark upon my hair.

I am the King of Faëry  
 And none there is so gay  
 Amid my gentle people  
 That dance the dew away.  
 I am the King of Faëry  
 And none there is so sad,  
 Though Una is my lady  
 And Aodh my serving-lad.

NORA HOPPER.



## A Celestial Chat.

WRITTEN BY EDEN PHILLPOTTS. ILLUSTRATED BY RENÉ BULL.

"WELL, old man, how goes it?" said the Comet.

"Still jogging along, old chap," answered the Sun.

"Any news since my last round?"

"Don't think so."

"I suppose you know I've been away thirty-five millions of years?"

"What's that after all? You look as boyish as ever."

The Comet showed pleasure. He prided himself on his youth, and was wont to dress young, and talk young, and behave young. Many constellations and nebulae invited to guess at his age, took him for not an hour more than fifty million years old, whereas, in reality, he was nearly thirty times as much.

"It's the exercise," he said; "nothing like it for keeping one agile and youthful. I've been eighty-three trillion, seventy-six billion, twenty-nine hundred millions of millions of quadrillions of miles since I saw you last. I attribute my health and—ahem!—good looks entirely to regular exercise."

"I wish I could have a run round with you," answered the Sun, "but I can't leave the System. I stroll my modest four hundred to five hundred million miles through space every year, but, of course, it's not enough to do any practical good."

"Lord! what a sedentary life," said the Comet: "don't you find it tell on your liver? With your temperature, too, you ought to make yourself take some reasonable exercise. I'm sure you'd get rid of those spots if you did."

"Ah! it's jolly easy for you, free-lances to talk! You have nothing to think of but your own tail; I'm a busy man."

The Comet did not like this somewhat slighting allusion to his tail.

"As to that, my dear fellow, a tail fifty millions of miles long takes some watching, I can assure you. It isn't all beer and skittles going at the pace I do,

and keeping clear of everything and everybody. It wants tact and a cool head, anyway."

"Why, you wouldn't hurt anybody if you hit 'em," said the Sun, rather rudely; "everybody knows you could pack the whole of your tail into a Gladstone bag, and still leave room for your toothbrush and a change of linen."

"No," admitted the other, "I shouldn't hurt other people, but they might jolly well shatter me. I'm not a robust Comet for all my apparent physical strength. It's a trying life, and there are dangers. Why, you yourself, though you mean well, always singe my hair and give me a sharp attack of fever every time I pass you. But never mind me and my tail. How prospers it with you? How's the System?"

"Going strong; but sometimes I feel inclined to chuck the whole lot of 'em up—the little plagues! But I can't help feeling a bit proud of the inhabited ones."

"Ah, you've warmed some of them into life since I was last round?"

"O, yes. A few have quite interesting little things living on them. Mars, for instance; they are getting fairly advanced there. Saturn has put on frills since you were here. He found a small nebula which had lost its way, and now wears it like a collar." Saturn's a regular child of Nature.

"How's Venus? Lovely as ever?"

"Lovely enough, but more bother than all the rest of 'em put together. She'll get into trouble some of these days—there are half-a-dozen Comets after her as it is—no self-respect, you see—so different from Jupiter."

"He was always your favourite."

"No, no, I have no favourites, unless my own little Mercury may so be called. But Jupiter has such a distinguished way with him. No folly, no giddiness. Always the same. A thousand pities he's got such a wretched climate. I'm doing what I can, but I haven't yet been





"WELL, OLD MAN, HOW GOES IT?"



"HALF-A-DOZEN COMETS AFTER HER"

able to get anything to live on Jupiter but frogs, and a few of the lower reptiles."

"How's the Earth?"

"Don't ask me—the black sheep of

the System! The ingratitude of that planet! They've got a little dead cinder that circles round them, according to the laws of gravitation; and—would you believe it?—they think twice as much of

that cinder as they do of me! A fact. They call it the Moon and write poetry to it. The Earth people have, in fact, reached a trying stage. They are growing out of childhood, but still lie far removed from the solidity and reasoning powers proper to an adult. They are funny, too. Here's a bit of New Humour to take away with you. What d' you think they believed till the last few years?"

"Sure I don't know," said the Comet.

"That I went round them! They thought that they were the centre of the Universe, and that Creation circled round and round them, just in the same way that their little pet cinder, they call the Moon, goes round and round them!"

"Blessed if that isn't the funniest thing I've heard for ten million years!" said the Comet. "I'll make my little corner in Space fairly scream with that!" He was genuinely amused, and shook to such an extent that he gave rise to considerable disturbances on a large scale.

"Look out, old man! your upsetting my System!" said the Sun.

"Smother your system!" yelled the Comet. "That little pill of mud and water to think itself the centre of all things! Why don't you smash it or frizzle it up?"

"We must be patient. It knows somewhat better now. If it would only be commonly grateful and realise a little of what it owed me, I would overlook the bumptiousness. That's natural to all small things."

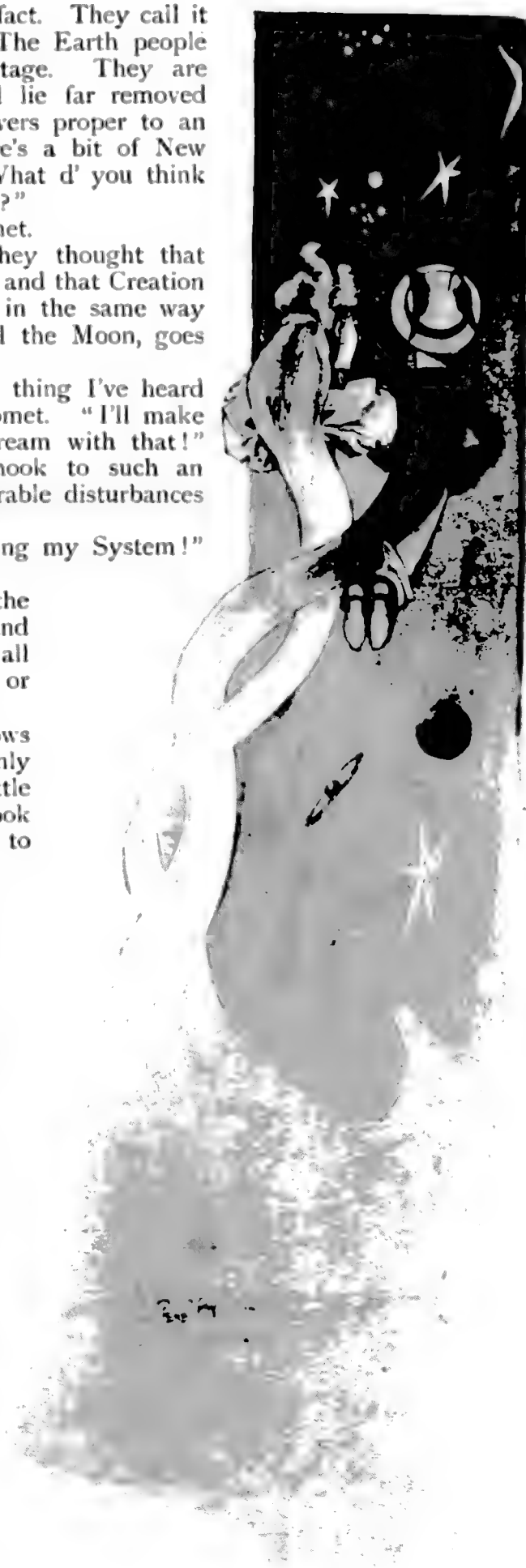
"I believe you. For sheer side, not to say impertinence, commend me to shooting-stars. Space is full of them and they go slogging about in clusters, as if God Almighty had designed the Universe for nothing but their especial amusement and convenience. Little cads! They always think it a huge joke to go right through me like a bullet through a piece of paper."

"But they can't hurt you."

"No, not physically; it's the moral disgrace of the thing. One feels so powerless against the little brutes; and satire's thrown away on 'em."

"They get precious small change out of me or my System either," answered the Sun. "I burn them up in billions and trillions myself: I light my cigars with 'em. And the Planets—they've all got their own atmospheres; and when a shooting star gets into an atmosphere, it's done for. You ought to cultivate an atmosphere."

"No time," said the Comet. "In



"ARM-IN ARM"

fact, I must be off as it is. "Can't stop! Can't stop! Can't stop!"

"Any news in Space?"

"Only that the Milky Way has gone sour. It's to be called the Milky Whey in future!"

The Sun laughed, but not heartily. He had heard the Comet make this same joke on many previous occasions. Every thirty-five million of years, he was expected to smile at this paltry jest, and his good nature was breaking down under the strain.

"Eclipse me, if I'm not fairly sick of that!" said the Sun. "It wasn't too funny the first time he said it; now it's grown simply wearisome and sickening. Next time he comes round, I must really make an effort to shame him out of it. There should be lots of other good jokes knocking about in a place the size of Space."

Then the tail of the traveller vanished round the corner of one of the signs of the Zodiac, and the Sun resumed his regular occupation, and beamed upon his System as usual.

"He has got a warm heart and no pride, for he doesn't mind what he shines on," thought the Comet, as he followed his lonely and terrific way at the usual rate of progression. "Family cares are all very well; but they do tie a heavenly body down, and frightfully increase his responsibilities. I should never think it quite good enough myself. No System for me! To remember what a light-hearted chap that Sun was in the sweet old days, before he knew he had a System! Now he's as crusty as the Great Bear, and his outbursts of temper are horrible to witness. No, my idea is the best: see Space, and gather your rose-buds while you may."

So saying, he took off his hat to a Lady Comet, and the two proceeded arm-in-arm for a few hundred thousand miles. He told her about the Earth and the Sun; and, though a Comet without much sense of humour, she laughed without intermission for thirteen centuries afterwards.



DISPLAYING HIS GOOD POINTS

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY MCLELLAN, CANONBURY, N.

# *The Wheel in the Desert.*

A CHILD'S STORY FOR WELL-GROWN FOLK.

WRITTEN BY ANGUS EVAN ABBOTT. ILLUSTRATED BY RENÉ BULL.

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**W**HAT in the world put it into her silly head I cannot say, and how she managed it at all is more than I can tell. For, you see, her skirts had been soldered to great blocks of granite, and her feet embedded in sticky mortar for no other purpose than to keep her from wandering. But notwithstanding all these things, Miss Statue-of-Liberty one morning threw away her flaming torch, and gathering her skirts at one sweep, stepped down into New York harbour, and, without looking to one side or the other, made right across the Atlantic—for you know Miss Liberty was born and grew to the big woman she is in Europe. And while all the little girls and boys of London looked on, what does she do but mount the Great Wheel at Earl's Court, and using it as a bicycle, rides over the Crystal Palace (just between the two great towers the Wheel passed), and down to Dover, and over the cliffs, plump across the Channel, and through France on to Paris, and up to the Eiffel Tower, and, would you believe it, without getting off her wheel, she pulls up the Eiffel Tower by the roots, and, using it as a spear, she runs tilt at the Pyramids, because, she said, they had occupied Egypt long enough already; and as they gave no sign of moving, she intended to clear them out. As to the terrible fight between Miss Liberty on the Earl's Court Wheel and the Sphinx, whose tail Miss Liberty had run over in her charge at the Pyramids, it is not my intention to tell, as you know a war correspondent who was not there wrote up the whole thing in such a graphic way, that people who actually saw the affair said that, although, of course, it was not a report of the real fight, still it was a fight good enough to have been real. This report has now passed into history; you know, my dears, history is a record of events that might have happened.

Those who saw the fight remember

that it came to an end by Miss Liberty's back hair breaking loose, for she, putting up both hands, lost her balance, and fell off the Great Wheel. Now the Wheel spinning round at a great rate at the time of this accident, off it darts at top speed, and all alone, away it goes into the terrible desert, and in a cloud of sand disappears into the Khalifa's country. Miss Sphinx curled herself up again, and put her chin on her paws quite happy, for she had got over calling the little boys and girls of the world to rights in all things; but Miss Liberty, being a young woman, was very, very cross, and cried a bit, until Li Hung Chang, the Pantomime Policeman, came along, and told her to move on, because, you know, Miss Liberty, with that disregard for other folks' rights that she usually shows, had sat down right in the middle of the Nile, thereby creating an obstruction, and the poor little crocodiles could not get up stream to eat the black boys, whom kind nurses like to see playing beside the stream. So Miss Liberty went back to her home, and had an awful row with a haughty Customs man, who insisted on knowing under which head she claimed the right to enter New York—as old iron, or as a destitute alien as she had no luggage with her. He was for shipping her back again, saying, in a brogue, that what with Customs officers and Irish policemen, they had no use for Liberty out there; but the people would have her to stay, for people like to have, at least, the appearance of Liberty in their land. However, as our little Indian Idol says, “that is a different narrative.”

Well, about the Great Wheel. It had gone clean out of sight into the desert. The children of Britain were very, very sorry not to have the Great Wheel with them, and they sent word to Lord Wolseley that if he did not get the Khalifa to send back the Wheel, they would not play any more with little red soldiers, with or without little red, lead horses; and that



every time they saw their nurses talking with soldiers they would drop their bonnets into the gutter and squall, even if they did get smacked for so doing, so there. This, of course, was such a crisis as happens to few leaders of an Army, and Lord Wolseley at first thought of calling out the Volunteers, who are sworn to protect mammas and nursemaids so long as the mammas and nursemaids stay at home; but at last he dropped a post-card to the Khalifa, asking, would he, when he had satisfied himself that

He lives in a great desert, where the sand grows, and locusts and camels; an awful wild place, too dry, and stiff walking for civilised men to travel over; so Lord Wolseley had to depend for news of the Wheel upon German bagmen. These people are the cleverest in the world at picking up overlooked trifles in the way of trade, and also at eating soup with a knife. We cannot do either well at all. These bagmen brought the awful news that the Dervishes had been and gone and set the Great Wheel on the



"SHE RUNS TILT AT THE PYRAMIDS"

the Great Wheel was not a Catherine, nor made of gingerbread, please drop it into the nearest red pillar-box, for the children in Britain wanted it to go round. The Khalifa, you must know, is a curious man, who all at once grows into a frightful ogre every time the foreigners want us to leave the banks of the Nile—well, maybe not so much the banks of the Nile as the banks of Cairo. He is said to have one black eye every time our soldiers go to see him, but it soon gets well again. Well, this frightsome ogre said to Lord Wolseley: "I shan't, so there. What is our own we'll hold."

neck of a giraffe, the Wheel on its side like, you know, not standing on its head as it did at Earl's Court. The Wheel just slipped comfortably over the giraffe's head, and rested a giraffe's-front-legs height from the desert sand; and on the head of the giraffe—as cool as you please—sat the Khalifa, himself overlooking everything, while his wives took the money, for, you see, he was using it as a merry-go-round. A choir sang songs, led by a chimpanzee, the bass roared by a lion, the dromedary squealing treble, the hippopotamus singing alto, I think, and the buffalo lowing tenor; and a band,



"USING IT AS A MERRY-GO-ROUND"

made up of a great number of quaint beasts—I cannot tell you what instruments each animal played, but I know the spider-monkey had cut a hole on top of the flamingo's bill, and so played flute, and that the ostrich stood off and kicked the big drum which the rhinoceros carried on his horn ; well, this band played "The Ship I Love," whilst the giraffe slowly turned round, with the Great Wheel

to prove expense was no object to him either, he would keep the Wheel from the girls and boys of Britain if it cost ten thousand of his fighting-men a crown each. So there was nothing for it. The boys and girls want their Wheel, and Lord Wolseley has had to send a great number of dada's into the Khalifa's country to bring it ; and every morning you may see reported how these soldiers



"CUT A HOLE ON TOP OF THE FLAMINGO'S BILL AND SO PLAYED THE FLUTE"

swinging to its neck, and the little black boys and girls paid their pennyworth of locusts to the Khalifa for a ride. When this became known, of course the British children were bent on having the wheel again, for the best toys are always those with which other children are playing. Lord Wolseley told the Khalifa he would have to have the Wheel even if it cost him—I mean his country, no the Caisse—a shilling ; and the Khalifa said that,

are drawing nigh to the bad Khalifa's country, there to find the biggest merry-go-round the world has seen for many a day.

And the poor little French boys and girls! They were very sorry at the breaking up of the Eiffel Tower, for now the stars cannot have their faces washed, and so will soon begin to look dim again. If you watch the sky this month, you will see that the stars need washing.





# The Feast of the Moon

WRITTEN BY ARTHUR WYCHERLEY ILLUSTRATED BY O. ECKHARDT

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"I AM going to the band at the lakes, Dick," said I to my chum after tiffin one day last March. He nodded, but made no remark. I had known him for some years now—ever since his great trouble—and we were staying at the Pegu Club, loitering away our time in Rangoon after a long shooting tour in the Straits.

Sorrow cannot endure for ever, but the death of the girl to whom he was engaged, through a boating accident at Henley, had left two strange marks on his character when the cloud had otherwise lifted at last. He hated white roses—and, indeed, any white flowers—and music of every sort. On the day of her death, the girl he was to marry was wearing white roses, and as they were carrying the body to an inn they passed a house in which a violinist—a master of his art, so Dick told me, and he was a good judge and no mean performer himself—was playing an air that haunted my friend ever after—the adagio movement from Beethoven's *Sonata Pathétique*. "For these reasons," he said to me bitterly,

*"I shall never be friends again with roses,  
I shall hate sweet music my whole life long."*

Well, I went down to the boat-house, and taking a canoe paddled under the lea of an island, to read Tennyson's *Idylls*, and to dream and listen to the string band of the —th Regiment, then quartered, with others, at Rangoon. When I got back to the Pegu Club some three hours later I went straight to the reading-room, in a corner of which I discovered Dick with a look of quite unwonted animation in his eyes.

"I say, old chap," he began with suppressed excitement, "I've had the

most extraordinary visitor this afternoon—a fakir of sorts—who told me things of my past life that I thought nobody knew."

I laughed. "Been tapping your bearer, I expect." And the moment after I regretted the remark, when Dick in a low voice, almost a whisper said "He described her, what she wore that day, how she died," and then after a pause, "he said she would be waiting for me to-morrow night—the Burman's feast of the moon—by the Sacred Tank."

Delicately as I could I tried to eradicate from his usually practical, cynical mind the unreasoning faith in the supernatural which the fakir seemed to have implanted there. I suggested the fellow might artfully have forced his thoughts into a certain channel and then read them in the form of answers to tacit questions of his own. Dick got quite angry and said:

"At any rate I am going to this Sacred Tank. I have found out where it is."

Next day he showed signs of a bad night and was strangely preoccupied, but as the day wore on he pulled himself together.

At tiffin he said: "I suppose you won't accompany me to-night, unbeliever?"

I jumped at the chance, for somehow I had misgivings of foul play of one kind or another.

"If you don't wish to be alone of course I will come," I said, and so it was settled.

After dinner a ticca gari drove us two miles or so along the kokaing road till we came to a cart track which led through the pine jungle to the Sacred Tank, wherein dwelt the uncanny-looking sacred fish and their attendant turtles, all ministered unto by an old wizened mincola who lived in one of the few huts scattered in clearings round the tank. To-night they were all deserted; doubt-





"I AM COMING, I AM HERE!"



less the dwellers were in the city of some neighbouring village whence floated the musical *ting-tong-ting* of the gongs, pitched in various keys, and carried by the processions of feasting Burmans, clad in many-coloured silks and sporting the pretty white temple flowers in their hair.

We sat down on a fallen tree-trunk and smoked in silence. Dick seemed to be brooding on the past, and I was disinclined to talk, and annoyed with myself

it?" and he hummed the opening bars of the adagio movement.

I heard nothing but the distant ringing of the gongs; but suddenly I caught the sobbing cadence of that lovely piece of harmony, but it seemed an echo only, or, if you can conceive it, a rendering of the passage in a huge bell jar from which the air had been exhausted: magically clear, divinely sweet and sad, but so faint that the ear could just catch it and no



"HE WAS QUITE DEAD"

for a strange eerie feeling whereof I was beginning to be conscious. How long we had been there I know not, but suddenly my friend started up with a cry—a veritable "cry that shivered to the tingling stars"—and strode forward with arms outstretched, talking (as I thought, raving) to someone I could not see.

"Darling, wait one moment: I am coming, I am here" (walking a few steps forward) and then, "My God, there it is again"—(turning to me) "don't you hear

more. It was only as it died away that the succeeding silence convinced me it had been at all.

Dick stood like a statue, intently listening, with a strained lost look on his face. I took him gently by the arm, and he suffered me to lead him away, like a sleep-walker.

The following day he was down with a bad go of fever. I was with him most of the day, and went to his quarters as soon as I had finished dinner. They were empty. His bearer was in the



godowns, and when I summoned and interrogated him he only looked dazed. I cursed him in heaps, and scribbling a note to the D.S.P. I sent him off with it, and myself rushed out with my own boy in quest of the absentee.

High and low I hunted, but found no clue; then I returned, weary and dispirited, to the club, where I found Curtis, the D.S.P., awaiting me and any reports from the surrounding police thanas.

Suddenly an idea struck me; why it had not earlier I know not. "Come," I said, and Curtis and I, taking a gari as soon as we could get one, drove to the Sacred Tank.

It must have been five in the morning

when we came upon him. He was lying on his face, one hand outstretched, just where the vision must have appeared the night before. We raised him gently; he was quite dead, with the mysterious smile of those who have solved the great secret frozen on his lips. We got him down to the gari as best we could, and started back to Rangoon. As we passed the barracks by the Gold Pagoda, the band was practising. With a shock I recognised the piece; it was the adagio again. Involuntarily I looked at the dead man, expecting him to start, to speak. But the music of the immortals had hushed for him the harmonies of earth.

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## LOVE THE DEBT

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My debt to you—

Some golden moments, each one worth a year  
Of dingy life, the only life I knew  
When I was sadly solvent; free, my dear,  
Of debt to you.

My debt to you—

Faith's resurrection: young beliefs that come  
In throngs—as blossoms come that burst anew  
From frostbound earth—an ever-swelling sum  
Of debt to you.

My debt to you—

The strength to live and work, courage to mount  
Alone and blind up duty's steeps; to do  
And dare for love: all this and more I count  
As debt to you.



# *The Family Fiend*

WRITTEN BY EDEN PHILLPOTTS. ILLUSTRATED BY E. J. SULLIVAN

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THOUGHT I knew about every sort of chippiness there was to know; but there are depths of chippiness hidden from a chappie until he begins to get ancient, and it was not until I stood on the brink of thirty that I ever felt the full horrors of the complicated chippiness which ended in the apparition of the Heirloom. The whole point of the thing is that my ancestors happen to date

back a goodish way. Like a Japanese print, they were highly decorative without being exactly beautiful in themselves. You see their names in history, and they are generally described as running away and hiding after overwhelming defeats. When they were caught it was the custom to behead them. They usually figured on the losing side, and when accident gave their cause victory the sensation was so strange that they got above themselves and had to be checked by their own princes and rulers. At the beginning of this century they dwindled down into country gentlemen, and now they have nearly dwindled out altogether. True I exist, but as a mere forlorn, autumnal leaf upon a tree whose glories have vanished on the wind—a tree, moreover, which may never bud again. In fact the end is assured, for not four-and-twenty hours ago my hand was refused by the only woman I shall ever offer it to. Hence the chippiness. I thought with great friction of brain about the position: I tossed on a bed of care for some hours, then an unholy light from nowhere in particular illuminated my bed-chamber, and I became conscious of an absolutely novel form of agony

which had fastened upon my right big toe.

Bending forward to ascertain what had happened, I heard a voice, felt a horrible throb of pain, and found that a Thing, gruesome beyond power of words to describe, sat upon my suffering foot. It was quite black, four inches high, had yellow eyes, a tail curved over his back like an angry scorpion's, and long red teeth and claws. Its expression of countenance was one of cynical amusement, and it kept its position as I tried to shake it off by burying both hind claws in the joint of my big toe. Before I had time to get a shoe and squash the Thing, it spoke, and revealed itself a conscious animal with extremely classy diction and evidently a much higher intelligence than my own.

"I must introduce myself," he said, "though I daresay that is wholly unnecessary. You know me well enough by name, if not by sight and touch. We shall be better acquainted presently. I am a protean person, as you may have heard. Chronic I can be, or acute; I touch a man in his toe or his temper, his eyes or his head, his throat or his stomach, his knee, his hand, his heart. My name is Gout—at least that is what you people call me. Your name I know. You may be interested in seeing how my acute effects are produced."

"One minute!" I cried. "This is wrong, monstrous, contrary to all the laws of Nature. You don't know the chappie you are torturing; you've made a big mistake. Why, fiend, I'm the most temperate, self-contained, orderly person in London. It's absolute nonsense your coming tormenting me. I only eat the most wholesome food, and never take sugar with anything. Fish and green vegetables and a little ripe fruit and sago puddings and mutton broth, representing my entire system of nourishment. You've no sort of business to look at a man who





"MY HAND WAS REFUSED"

conducts himself as I do. Think of the early hours I keep; think of the way I avoid the night air; think of the long walks I take. Why, my health is my great hobby. Then you must know perfectly well what I drink: weak tea; and at rare intervals—rare intervals, mind—Scotch whisky in the most minute doses. Moreover, I mingle bicarbonate of potash with everything, and whenever I have a spare moment I eat a lithia tablet which contains five grains of lithium citrate. Why, *nobody* keeps so quiet and good as I do! Fiend alive, can't you see the thing is monstrous, unseemly, unfair? What's

the good of medical science and self-denial, of common sense and wisdom, if a man's precautions are to be thrown to the wind in this way by a vicious and unreasonable complaint? Get off that toe, there's a good soul. Probably you didn't know all these facts or you wouldn't have come."

But he made no attempt to get off; he smiled and took a tighter grip; and if you want to know what it felt like, buy a pound of French nails and make them red-hot, and hammer them into your great toe-joint one by one.

"What you say is reasonably true, I



admit," he answered. "You weary your friends with the subject of your health; you are one of those unpleasant people who eat drugs with your meals, and drop powder or tablets into everything you consume; you quail before the most simple and wholesome menu: you live with your hand on your pulse, and squander your slender substance on medical men, who laugh when your back is turned. All this is common knowledge. But look back a little way; recollect that extremely jovial, not to say rollicking stock, from which you derive your name. Nothing could be much tamer than you are, I admit. No caterpillar ever lived a more insipid and wholesome life. But you're the last chip of a very different sort of block, my friend. Your ancestors didn't take any bicarbonate of potash with their food—no, nor lithium citrate either. They didn't keep quiet and good—not they: they didn't even keep sober. They ate like men, and drank like men, and finished their purple nights as gentlemen should: with the bottles under the table. Generations upon generations of them lived hard, and died hard; and those who couldn't run to old port, drank old October, and drank the more. Their health never bothered them, and when I came along, they swore and tried to drown me in the best their cellars or barrels still held. None of your whining nonsense about them. And now they have gone under, and the bones I twisted are bare, and the merry jowls lie in rotten coffins, and

laugh at you, and me, and all things. Yet they knew something—those dead-and-gone boys. They knew that land can change hands only less quickly than money; they knew the rot was at the root of their ancient family tree. In their cups it maybe that they even foresaw you. Anyway you wrong them when you assert that they left behind nothing but a name. They left Me: Hereditary Gout. That was a bequest no rascal or spendthrift could make ducks and drakes of; that was an heirloom no irreverent survivor could sell or pawn. You can hand me down to your sons and daughters, that's all. I shall stick by you, believe me. The faithfulness of women and dogs is nothing beside the faithfulness of your servant, Hereditary Gout. I shall not kill you unless you escape everything else, which is unlikely in a man who takes so much medicine as you do. No, I shall merely remind you of the dead-and-gone glories of your family. I shall flutter about you, the pleasing ghost of red wine drunk by better men than yourself, of riotous jollity, of wild festivity, of general recklessness, and of a generation the like of which this neurotic race will never see again."

He bowed and vanished; but I felt his claws still in my toe, and his teeth, and the tip of his horrid barbed tail. I rang for my valet, ascertained the hour was two in the morning—a time when human pulses beat their feeblest—and I immediately sent for my medical-man.

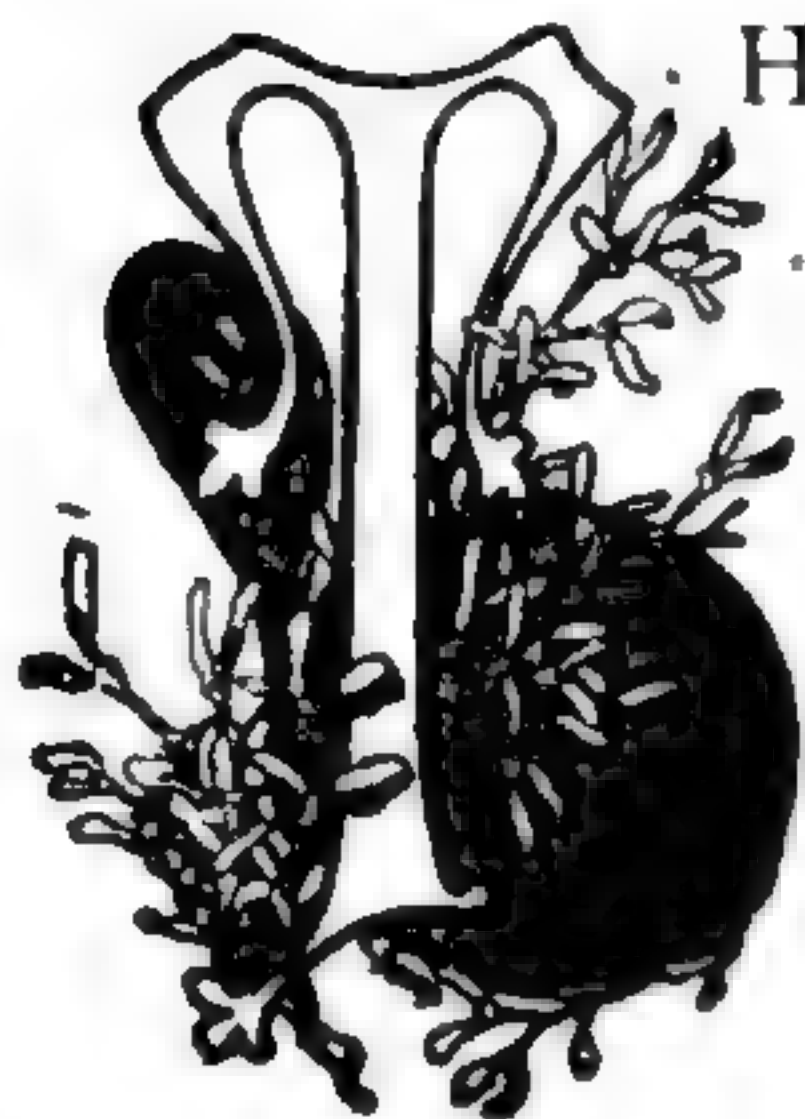




# *A Gruesome Wooer*

WRITTEN BY LOUIS CRESWICKE. ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN H. BACON

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HE last train from the Mansion House thundered into the station as I ran down the steps. The collector clipped my ticket and I precipitated myself into a corner of an empty first-class carriage with the relieved air of one who writes "Finis" to a long spell of experiences. The night was bleak, and it was satisfactory to know that a warm bed gaped invitingly at the other end of the gaseous subterranean tunnels through which the train rumbled.

For a long time my thoughts wheeled round Lilla—the flower she had worn in her tea-gown whereof some petals were pressed in my breast pocket, the soft milk-blue of her temples, where a beautiful tracery of veins showed like little rivulets running to a warm land of love—her heart—the pretty pink fists she was wont to close like a chubby babe, displaying a row of dainty dimples where the knuckles should have been—my mind dwelt on all these, and then settled on the goodly knowledge she was mine, mine as much as bond twixt soul and soul could make her. Later on I began to get practical, to think of mundane things, and to wish I had bought an evening paper. I felt in my overcoat for one, but found nothing save some odd cuttings from a Press Agency, résumés of one of my recent lectures. To these I returned. The type was small and the gas in the lamp above seemed to be unusually dull; perhaps the glass protector was merely dim, but, whatever the cause, reading was difficult and wearying. I was straining to decipher some passages I ought to have known almost by heart, when, glancing again to grumble at the light, I fancied I caught

a glimpse of a disappearing dot of black above the high edge of the partition that divided my compartment from the adjoining one. At any rate on looking up it vanished. I had forgotten on entering to notice if the other compartment held a passenger, and now began to wonder whether or not such was the case. By standing on the seat and looking over, curiosity might forthwith be satisfied, but I shrank from doing what I suspected had been done to me, and I decided not to imitate the example of vulgar peeping some "bounder"—so my thought christened him—had set. I resumed my interest in the press cuttings, or pretended so to do, for now the edge of the partition had for me an intense fascination. Though scrutinising the paper in my hands, I wondered whether the espionage would be resumed, puzzled if it had been espionage at all, in fact began to question almost excitedly if there really could be a traveller behind the screen or not. The more I strove to subdue the smouldering curiosity, the more alive it grew, till every other moment I shot stray and sudden glances in hope of catching the individual who was causing me this annoyance. There was no sign of him. Suspense and curiosity battled, till I began to think that my eyes must have tricked me, and decided to fix them steadily on the exact point where I had seen the black dot appear. For a few moments I glared uselessly into the haze below the lamp—mist or dust had thickened the atmosphere—and then gradually, so gradually as to be almost imperceptible at first, appeared the small black dot. It rose higher and higher, till it stood an inch above the margin of the screen, the crown of a head with two black eyes showing above the level of the woodwork. The eyes encountered mine, and there was a singular expression



in them. In another moment they were gone.

Fury now took the place of curiosity, and I bent over the press cuttings the better to cogitate what would be the best means of resenting the impertinence. Then I fancied the black speck was again rising. I was too proud to show anxiety, so, in order to be on guard, I peered through the window of the railway carriage, which, all being black behind, acted as a mirror. It reflected plainly enough for my purpose, for soon, as expected, the pair of eyes, more luminous in the surrounding dullness, became clearly visible. I could feel my own pupils dilate, and fix themselves into a stare, but I determined to wheel them round and confront those of the wretch who was trying to amuse himself at my expense. Shame at my own nervousness almost restrained the indignation which I knew I should have displayed at this unwarrantable impudence.

"What do you want?" I blurted brusquely.

An unusual word in an unusual voice was the answer.

The tone was shrill, like the rending of calico, the word spoken was not English. It more resembled Arabic, but the accent was not pure, nor was it the mongrel dialect prevalent at Alexandria or elsewhere. I repeated the question imperatively; from a foreigner I meant to stand no nonsense.

The reply came back as before. I jogged my memory and skimmed through my rough vocabulary of Oriental tongues. The word finally I recognised as one meaning companionship.

"You want companionship?" I queried.

"Ay," said the owner of the eyes.

"Then come over, and don't get humbugging at the back of the partition," I growled, preferring to have the strange individual at close quarters rather than dodging out of reach in this uncanny fashion. There was no answer, so I repeated the remark in the best and most surly Arabic I could muster, when two mahogany-coloured hands that absolutely resembled nothing save claws, clasped the edge of the woodwork, and

in another moment, light as a feather, the extraordinary person was over on my side of the compartment.

The sense of relief I had hoped for was still-born; my discomfort, keenly alive, leapt to a horrible maturity. In front of me was the creature, a woman, and an Egyptian woman, for she was veiled after the manner of the race. She wore the long blue gown, the cross piece for the lower part of the face, and the hard rings that conceal the nose, but whether as a native, or as a masquerader at some London orgy I could not tell. She was completely shrouded but for the claw-like hands and the luminous unfathomable eyes. Suspicion suggested the dress was used as a disguise, but certainly no male was behind it. A smaller and thinner mortal I had never seen, for the robe, many sizes too large, flapped apparently over bones. These facts grappled with my thoughts in one fevered moment, and disgust with myself for my chicken-livered attitude overpowered me. Still the intruder made me uneasy. I played with the window, lowering it to let in air. I decided that unprotected females should not be permitted to travel by night-trains in fancy attire, and vowed to vent my grievance in the papers. As the silence of the offender, who had taken up a position in the far corner, was more unpleasant than intercourse, I boldly broke into the language of her country. If she should prove a fraud she would find me a match for her. I had studied both modern and obsolete tongues, and a natural interest in curiosities drew me forcibly towards this one.

"May I ask if you come from Egypt?" She made a salaam of assent. Though her eyes did not turn in my direction their extraordinary brilliance seemed to flash back at me. "And where are you travelling?"

"I know not," she said with a courtly accent that was archaic and almost incomprehensible.

"How!" I exclaimed, my alarm rising.

"Here was I brought by those who stole me and fled."

I thought the creature was mad,



and doubted whether or not I should attempt a conciliatory vein. I cursed the lamp for its dimness, and once or twice, when we stopped at a station, conceived the craven notion of making a bolt from the carriage, but sheer curiosity riveted me to the seat.

"Stole you from your native land?" I asked commiseratingly.

like to know how you got here," I said with more directness.

"So shall it be," she answered rising. "Can you go over this wall? I am light as air, but you are heavy as the Pyramid."

This was scarce a compliment, so I showed how ingeniously I could climb the partition. She was after me in an instant. I was wondering why she had



She shook her head, and the ragged whisp of a voice made a moan.

"How did you come?"

"The tale is long," she said, "and you that have great knowledge have not faith."

"O we believe anything nowadays," I assured her, with an uneasy laugh. "Knowledge twists like a corkscrew, you go round in a circle before you advance." I do not think my idiom appealed to her, for her Arabic was of a kind that was more comprehensible by relationship with classic tongues than with the ordinary Egyptian lingo. "I should

"MAY I ASK IF YOU COME FROM EGYPT"

insisted on my going to her compartment when the brown hand, that looked like the twig of a crumpled branch, pointed to the huge case of a double bass instrument which lay on the seat. It was open, but it contained nothing. It closely resembled a coffin, and she said with perfect calm, "In that was I brought hither."



"Good God!" I exclaimed, as the dawn of a mystery began to penetrate my brain. This, then, was the reason for her seeking my company.

"They who stole me put me there the better to carry me across the sea."

My eyes were fairly starting from their sockets. I began to dread that my foolhardiness and curiosity would lead me into an uncomfortable predicament; but still, having begun, it seemed necessary I should become acquainted with the particulars of this extraordinary statement.

"Who put you there—do you know?"

She nodded her head several times, and said:

"His speech betrayed that he was one Ahmed, a Maltese, the model of an artist."

"O!"

"With him was also a kinsman, who is servant to a professor of homœopathy in Paris. This much of their talk did I hear."

"And what did they want with you?" I asked, thrilling now with the touch of a clue which might lead to wonderful unravelment.

"The Professor would give much gold. He would cut me in pieces to deliver to the sick, that they may be well."

This was too much. She spoke seriously yet serenely. There was no doubt about it, the woman was mad. Had she said her body was wanted by vivisectionists, ghastly as the idea might have been, I could have entertained it; but by homœopathists—scientists avowedly antipathetic to vivisection?—the thing was impossible! I wiped my brow uncomfortably—a small rill of cold perspiration was running through my hair. I inspected the instrument case and found it empty but for some dusty odds and ends I did not examine. At this moment we halted at a railway station, and I had an impulse to rush out into the free air—the gaseous atmosphere of an underground tunnel seemed breezy in comparison to the suffocating sensation inside the compartment. But I resolved not to succumb to the weakness. It was ludicrous of a man six feet in height and proportion-

ately bulky to be scared by a shred of a woman with a muffled face: I wished devoutly that the light had been stronger, so that I might have viewed my companion more clearly as I pursued my questioning—no longer so much from curiosity as from dread of silence, which, enclosed as we were in whirling darkness, was appalling.

"Surely no homœopathists in Paris would sell a human being for medicine?" I ventured.

She bowed her head assertively. "One small piece of the maid who is young and beautiful, they say, will make youth to the old, blood to the sick."

I smiled slightly now, for sufficient of her was visible to prove she was neither juvenile nor lovely. This was evidently the subject on which she was crazed.

She detected the smile, and taking up the finger of her left hand she split a piece from the brown nail and handed it to me. It might have been the edge of burnt toast.

"What shall I do with it?" I asked, to humour her.

"Taste!" she commanded.

Great Heavens! I thought, what will the creature want next?

"You fear," she said.

"I fear nothing," I averred doughtily, while the perspiration still exuded from the back of my neck, and so saying lifted the fragment to my lips. A touch of it was enough—it was sweet as honey—and I threw the piece down lest she might mean to poison me. Certainly, I resolved, I would get out at the next break. But I remained. I had become fascinated by her Arabic and her story, and when she spoke it was with an air of conviction that made me feel myself more mad than she.

"I heard the men telling to each other," she went on, "what they should do; and I did groan, for I was weary and needed breath. Then the Maltese unfastened the box, and swiftly, when a station came, they fled in fear. Afterwards came I forth and clothed myself in this robe which they had stolen and packed with me."

"You mean to say the ruffians placed you there without——" I hesitated.



"All that I tell to you is true. They took me from the house of the artist in this box because no one should know that they had robbed; and with me they stole these things that the painter had bought in my country."

This statement had an air of probability which again aroused my suspicions; that mad though she might be, there had been a basis, a possible cause for the mania.

"And the men took fright?"

"It befell in this manner. There were two men, also travellers; and on this box did one man place something which made the night fiery, like thousand lightnings."

"How did you know this?"

"I breathed, though no air was in the box."

"How did you know the men had touched it?"

"Afterwards, when the travellers had gone, the Maltese to his kinsmen did speak as the men had spoken, for his kinsmen knew not their tongue."

"You mean that the Maltese translated to his confederate what the Englishmen had said?"

"Even so. The Englishman and his friend spoke much of money—so told the model to his partner—and one drew forth a silver pin and wire, and strange substance of which the Maltese knew nothing, and placed it on the box. And thus he spake: 'When this is complete, then shall we be rich and honoured in the land, for we shall make the sleeping wake, and teach the stupid wisdom, and fight with sickness.' And on the top of that box the Englishman showed to his friend how his

silver needle should speak through the head of a man."

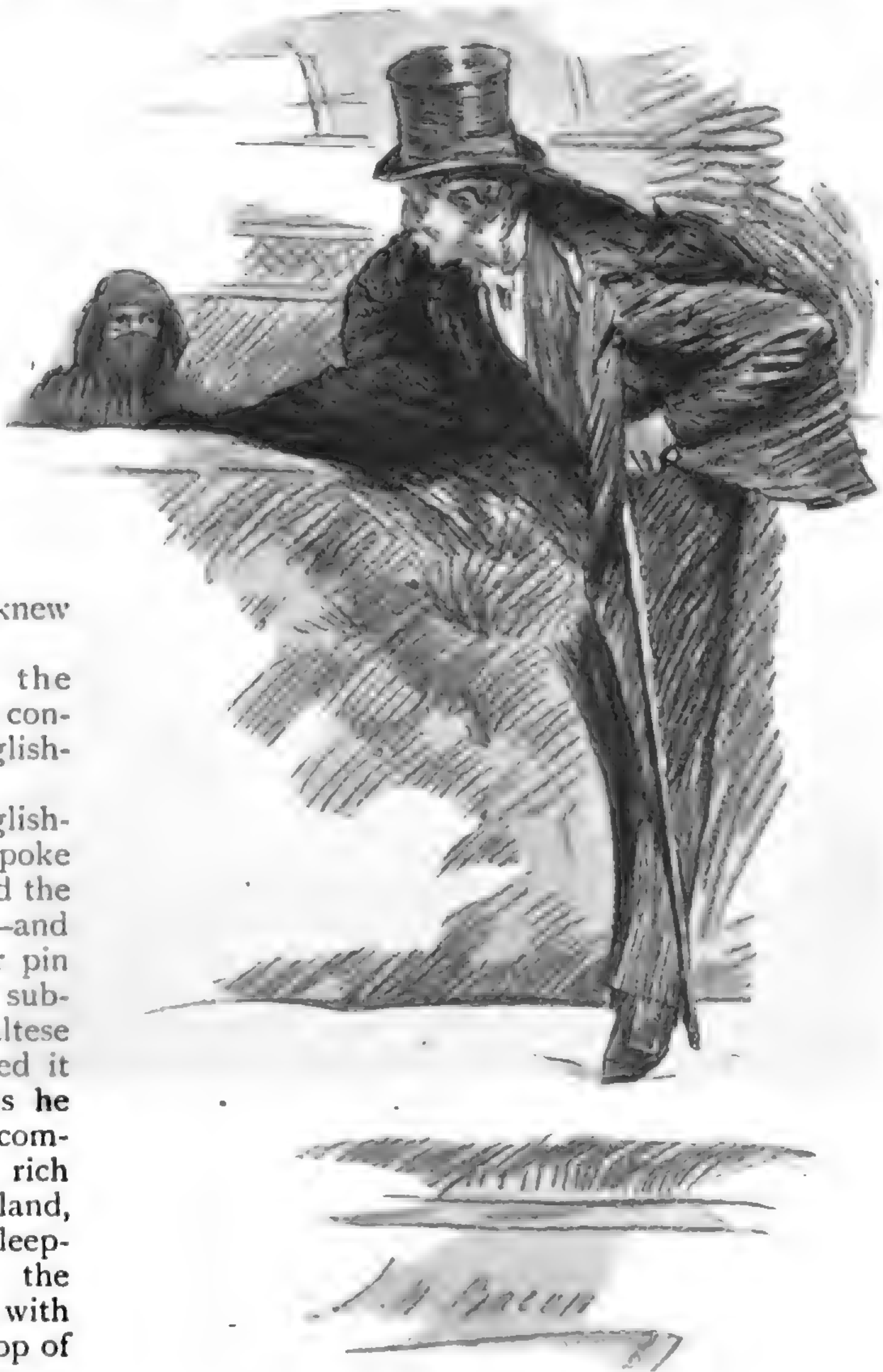
"All this the Maltese saw and explained to his friend?"

"It was so," my companion assented with dignity. "The Maltese when they had gone forth repeated the speech of the Englishman, and I, being awake, did hear."

"Did you speak?"

"It was at the sound of my voice that they fled."

I did not wonder! The tone of it, so high-pitched and frail, creaked like



"IN A MOMENT SHE WAS AFTER ME



an exhausted wind, now scraping a hoary branch, now sighing through river reeds. Proceeding from a live being it was certainly the most curious sound I had ever heard or ever wished to hear. But her story was interesting, and I burned to know more of it. It was evident the two men had experimented with electricity on what they had imagined to be an empty box; and, possibly, they had in some way magnetised or galvanised the contents. But the Maltese thieves must have been great tyros to rely on the perpetual silence of their prey—and in this negligence there seemed a hitch of some kind either in the proceedings or the narration of them.

"Were you asleep?" I asked, growing bolder as we passed a station and were nearing my destination.

"Ay," she said, "I had been asleep three thousand years."

I nearly leapt from my seat. This beat all that had gone before; either the woman was stark mad or she was bent on some intrigue and wished to hood-wink me. So as not too hurriedly to reply I rose and took off my overcoat; the night was chilly but my veins burned.

"Three thousand years!" I said as composedly as I could frame words.

"I am not quite sure. I am the daughter of a prince of the royal house of Queen Amenartas. My knowledge is great, for I am chief of the students of the college of Amen-Rà. Did you not say that knowledge went round; and do your maidens to-day go to their college as did the maidens of three thousand years ago? At the age of fifteen summers I gave up the ghost. They anointed me with honey that my fairness might not fade—the seat of my wisdom they sealed with precious spice that it might last for all the ages."

Immoderately I laughed at this revelation, but the mirth was hysterical. To steam through pandemonium with an emancipated mummy was an unhinging experience, and suppressed excitement needed some vent. It became impossible to ignore the sincerity of her statements: besides, her classic speech and its courtly inflections had originally impressed me

as differing vastly from the comparatively plebeian modern tongues wherewith I was acquainted. I drew a heavy breath, strove to resist a queer pusillanimous quaking, determined to meet her eyes. Then, horror-struck, I made the discovery that the remarkable luminosity of the orbs glowed from behind the eyelids—not from within them. The formation of the lids was statuesque, and as there was no iris their expression must have been due to some occult force of the brain—"the seat of her wisdom," as she had styled it. Instinctively I wedged myself closer to the corner, and my nostrils, sniffing the curious dust wherewith the air was charged, grew paralysed with bewildering numbness. She took no note of the action, but extended rigid fingers to the music box, taking from it some trifles—a silver oval, glass beads, two curious antique pots and a wooden effigy of a girl.

"If you believe me not—behold. Here the green with which these eyes were salved to save them from sting of flies, here the mirror for my loveliness and the paint to make me fairer in the sight of men, and here the image of myself—a princess. These things did bear me company from the hour wherein I fell asleep to that wherein they bartered me for twenty golden coins."

Though almost tongue-tied I found pluck to confute her statements.

"How about the Professor who cuts up young girls to heal the sick?"

"Thus declared the Maltese man. In books of later days he learnt that maidens pure, of age three thousand years, had virtues for the sick. His master knowing this, and also—as you said but now—that knowledge goes but round and round, would fain attest the truth."

Then I remembered that the people she quoted might have referred to repulsive nostrums made of mummy powder by the Jewish apothecaries of the Sixteenth Century. Possibly this French homœopathist was reviving the drug—stranger things have been known. In thus mentally arguing the pros and cons I restored my self-esteem, and tried to pretend that even in the presence of an



anomalous apparition I could preserve a judicial equilibrium; but my gaze, nevertheless, fell uneasily on the empty folds of drapery that drooped skirt-wise from the seat. It was terribly certain that no fleshy limbs could be beneath them, they were so lank and flat and contourless. No: this was no masquerade—this was no jest of some clown earning a fool-hardy bet. A queer asphyxiation seized me as I gasped with fear lest my brain might be creating its own phantom, but the voice, under the blue cloth muffling, went on.

"And now that I live I may take in marriage whomsoever I will, giving him for guerdon riches and renown. This I know from writings that explained the secret ways of Attica. They said: 'She who sets foot on earth after three thousand years doth gain the right to take a king and husband from among the peoples. The hour has come, and thou, O Englishman! art before me I have chosen.'"

She spoke with sovereign decision, and accompanied the speech with a regal wave of the hand, as though the Metropolitan Railway carriage contained the Empires of the world. At this alarming proposition I shrank still further away till the woodwork of the corner bruised my shoulders, but the creature with the cavenous mysterious gaze continued to advance with the arms of her Egyptian robe outspread, as though prepared to envelop me.

"'Tis thee I call my lord and king for ever!"

The weird wail clanged in my ears, my tongue felt hard and dry as a parrot's. Her boney claw was extended, her hand—that which had been her hand—clasped mine. Ah! To shriek would have brought relief, but her clutch was at my

throat—the sound died in a gurgle. The thuds of my heart, loud and fast, beating at the eardrum, made me dizzy, the light of the compartment waxed dimmer and



"CLUTCHED BY THIS GHASTLY WOOER"

dimmer. All that could be seen through the growing mists was the immensity of those widening imperturbable eyes that seemed to swallow, to drown me. I struggled for freedom, but the next moment was caught in the fork of



withered arms, while the light loathsome carcase—doubly loathsome because so light—lay on my breast.

No cry from my locked jaws—a wrench—a jerk—a plunge—to open the door of the railway carriage, and then out—rolling and rolling, clutched by this ghastly wooer, through the inky darkness of the night.

\* \* \* \*

On recovering consciousness I found myself in bed in a hospital ward. Round my head a bland doctor was arranging a bandage.

"Anything the matter?" I asked.

"Nothing," he said urbanely. "Dining last night?"

"I'm a teetotaller," I said, boldly facing

his allusion. "I seldom drink anything—not even water."

"Then you must have gone to sleep in the carriage, and fallen off the seat."

"Out of the door," I added.

"Not as bad as that—luckily for you."

"And the mummy—the woman?"

"What the deuce does he mean?" asked the leech of the nurse.

"Was there no instrument case—double bass box—in the compartment?"

"Nothing, and no one," said the doctor emphatically, dropping his blandness.

"You were just lumped on the floor as you had rolled over, with a cutting on Egyptology in your hand. The fact is you've been wool-gathering among the Pyramids, and the sooner you drop the habit the better."



"DRINK TO ME ONLY WITH THINE EYES"

PHOTO BY DICKINS, SLOANE STREET



# The Other Road

WRITTEN BY J. B. HARRIS BURLAND. ILLUSTRATED BY R. LILLIE



HE dog-cart rolled swiftly down the drive. It was so dark that the man could not see the woman's face; and this, perhaps, was well, for love was not the only look that was flitting across those large grey eyes.

It was either luck, or some instinct of the horse, that guided them safely in that first dark mile through the village and out into the silent country beyond. They had no lights and passed like a shadow across the night.

Presently he got down and lit the lamps.

"We must see our way, dearest," he said, tenderly. "We shall meet no one now." And when he had tucked the rug round them again, he kissed her. Her face was very cold.

"And afterwards?" she said. "Our way; can we see it?"

He lashed the horse and did not answer.

"The way is very dark," she continued: "I cannot see it now."

"You do not love me," he said, reproachfully, "or you would not speak like this."

"Not love you? I love you more than the soul I am destroying for you to-night." Then she looked behind, and the lights of her home sparkled through the trees in the distance. "There is light behind," she whispered. "It is honour." She turned round again: "See, I have turned my back upon it."

"There is light before us," he cried hoarsely. "It is love."

She was silent.

"Love is more than all," he whispered.

"Stronger than all," she said, correcting him.

It is impossible to fathom a woman's mind. Perhaps she thought it due to her to protest. Perhaps the cold night air that beat upon her face was clearing away the clouds of passion, enabling her to see the hard naked reality of things.

Again he cut into the horse with his whip, and the trap swayed from side to side down the narrow road. He took his watch out and held it to the light of one of the lamps.

"We shall barely catch the train," he said. He thought it better to bring the conversation to practical matters. It threatened to become too ethical.

She laid her hand upon his arm. "Drive faster," she whispered. He bent his head and kissed the hand: the victory was his.

So they whirled on through the night till the road began to rise more steeply, and the horse's speed dropped to a walk.

"The Greywater Bridge," he said: "we are not far off now."

Here the river had cut a curious ravine through the heart of the hills, and the old stone bridge that spanned it was the wonder and delight of every antiquary in the country. From the bridge the lights of the station could be seen, a mile away.

In a few minutes they had reached the top of the slope and were upon the bridge. The lights of their destination blazed brilliantly before them.

The woman looked back. Like a faint star in the distance shone a single twinkling light. It was the last she was to see of her home.

The nearness of the station, the terrible remoteness of that one faint gleam, broke upon her mind like a burst



of madness. She seized the reins and pulled the horse up.

"It cannot be," she cried; "turn back!"

"Are you mad?" he said angrily. "There is the station—we are close to it."

"I know, I know! It is too near! I am frightened. I cannot go with you: turn back before it is too late."

"Names, names!" he replied, "lighter than dust in March before the breath of love."

"But heavier and more choking than desert sands when the breath of love has died away."

"It never dies away."

She laughed. If this were true the world's history must be written afresh from the beginning.



"THERE IS ANOTHER WAY"

"And our love?" he said between his teeth.

She put her face in her hands and wept.

"Our love?" he repeated, sternly.

"It will have made the one great sacrifice. It will be purified of all its sin."

"I do not intend to give you up," he said quietly. He was a man with an iron will.

"Your honour!" she cried. "What of my honour—the honour of my husband?"

"Let us turn back," she pleaded. Then she said firmly, "I will go no further," and her voice told him there was no further hope.

He did not break out into useless pleading; he was silent, and the thoughts rushed through his brain as a stream of fire.

"There are but two roads," she continued calmly. "Behind us is honour: before us is the shame of a lifetime. I have chosen my road, for there are but two, and the one is impossible."



"You are mistaken," he said quietly. "There is a third," and he quickly turned the horse till it faced the walls of the bridge. Then, reining it in with an iron hand, he cut fiercely into it over flanks and legs and head till the whip ran red with blood. Then he let go the reins and clasped her in his arms in one sharp passionate embrace. As the reins fell the horse sprang forward like an arrow

loosed from the bow, and dashed over the low parapet before it.

They had taken the other road.

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The mockery of it all was that they did not die. But they dragged out their crippled lives for long and weary years, the woman tended and cheered by a loving husband, the man uncared for and alone.

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## SONG OF THE SEA-CHILDREN

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SONS of the stranger, daughters of the stranger,  
In our purple twilights soft the days go by,  
One like another 'neath a clear green sky:  
Never wind blows roughly on our gardens here,  
Planted thick with corals. Never leaf grows sere  
Of our rosy seaweeds. Is it so with ye?

In our purple twilights winter dares not come  
Here to make the flowers few and the singers dumb.  
Never any merrow shakes the wisdom-tree—  
Here may all be merry, even that wisest be:  
Sons of the stranger, daughters of the stranger,  
Come ye to the sea!

Sons of the stranger, daughters of the stranger,  
Come to us, who love you better than your kin,  
Every wave that lifts for you is a gate to win:  
Every foam-flower whispers you how its sisters fair  
Bloom to make you deathless garlands for your hair.  
Come to us, come down to us, even though ye die.

Under rosy seaweeds were it ill to lie  
With no hopes to mock you, and your dreams put by?  
Gifts we have to give you are of all the best—  
And your visions ye shall lose in your depth of rest:  
Come to us, come down to us, put your seeking by—  
Sons of the stranger, daughters of the stranger,  
Show us how to die.

NORA HOPPER.



# *The Silent Man*

WRITTEN BY C. GORDON WINTER. ILLUSTRATED BY C. M. SHELDON

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**W**HEN Stephen King went up to Cambridge and was promptly ploughed in his "Little Go," he laughed. It did not matter to him. He had no ambition and no particular desire to take a degree: he was not going to be a schoolmaster or a parson. The dons might plough him as often as they liked for aught he cared.

And why this indifference?

The reason was simple. When Stephen King left Winchester and became a member of Trinity College, Cambridge, he thought that the hardest task the future had in store for him was the spending of his father's fortune. It was only natural that he should think so, for was not his father the busiest solicitor in the City of London, and was not he his father's only child, and the heir to all his wealth?

It was even so. Stephen King's prospects were good. Few shadows seemed likely to darken his path in life.

But a day came when that father died. His earnings stopped with his breath. A man who, by the aid of a large professional income and unpaid bills, had lived in affluence, had died a pauper, and Stephen King—his son—found that he was left with a legacy of debt.

These things happen. There are many men who earn large incomes and never save a penny. With a sublime selfishness they never pause to think of the future or of those dependent on them. When they die their memory is not cherished.

The knowledge that the father from whom he had expected so much had left him less than nothing was a bitter blow to Stephen King, and for a time he was not himself.

Then the latent nobility that lies buried in the hearts of most men asserted itself in him, and he resolved to work and

to win for himself the position in the world that should have been his.

There are some peculiar natures that are stimulated and strengthened by poverty. His was one, and the resolve that he would not rest until his father's debts were paid spurred him on, as does the lash of the whip the tired horse.

The struggle was a hard one, and, while it lasted, he suffered more mental torture than he had ever deemed possible. He saw his mother grow pale and weak for the want of the luxuries which he could not give her, or so it seemed to him. He saw his friends fall away from him and pass him by in the street without a sign of recognition, because he was poor. He saw the woman he loved wait for him and grow old. He saw disappointment and want and misery embitter the life of one whose welfare was dearer to him than his own. He saw the sweet and noble qualities of her nature become soured and warped, her voice become querulous, her face haggard, dull, and bitter. He saw all these things and he was powerless to prevent them. And it seemed to him that the want of money was life's direst calamity; the acquisition of it life's chiefest end.

For years he worked untiringly. From morning until night he slaved to win gold, but in vain. Others grew rich; he remained poor.

He speculated wildly, but he neither lost money or made it. Whatever he touched seemed to stand still.

At last his mother died. He followed her—the solitary mourner—to what was little better than a pauper's grave. The woman he loved grew tired of waiting for him. She disappeared out of his life, and he knew not where she went. Then success came—the tide of fortune turned at last. One morning he found that some speculation had succeeded



beyond his wildest hopes, and he returned to his comfortless lodgings that night a rich man.

He felt no pleasure at what had happened. Wealth had come to him too late, since it could not bring happiness to those he loved. He paid off his father's debts—the debts which had killed his mother and spoilt his own life. But he did not rest content with what he had made. Men around him traded body and soul for gold, and from them he caught the fever of gain. It gripped him strongly. He did not want more money, yet he toiled and worked as hard for it as he had done twenty years ago. Each day he grew richer. Everything he touched turned to gold, and, like all about him, he went to fame over broken promises and the misery of hundreds who had trusted him.

His fortune doubled itself each month. He became a millionaire. Men who called themselves his friends crowded round him, and he—Stephen King, the lonely, broken-hearted man—was styled the “Napoleon of Finance.”

One afternoon he left the city, the richest man in England. He had successfully brought off a giant *coup*. Thousands were ruined by it, but he whose subtle brain had organised it and carried it through after many weeks of ceaseless toil, had gained such wealth as could buy up kingdoms. His face was calm and his eyes were dull and heavy as, amidst the congratulations of those who surged around him, he left the house and walked down the street.

He did not notice his carriage that was waiting for him, but, through sheer force of habit, hailed an omnibus and stepped into it. He bought an evening paper and saw that his triumph was proclaimed therein in large letters. He smiled faintly as he read through the

paragraph which hailed him in eulogistic terms as the Creosus of the nineteenth century. How little it meant to him! His eyes darkened, and the crowded, flaring streets became blurred to him as he thought of the past and of the happiness which his enormous wealth would once have brought him.



“THE RICHEST MAN IN ENGLAND”

He got out of the omnibus at the bottom of Park Lane, walked up the street, and let himself into the stately house that for six months past had been his home. A thin rain was beginning to fall, and the streets looked empty and cheerless; he shivered as he shut the front door. Then he went into his cosy library and sat down before the writing table which was littered with papers.

Mechanically he drew his cheque-book from his pocket, and, tearing a leaf out



of it, wrote a cheque to bearer for £500,000. He smiled as he signed it, thinking idly how little it would disturb him if someone else held it, for it did not represent one-fortieth of his entire fortune. He pushed the cheque on one side; he would send it to some charity to-morrow.

The shadows crept into the room and chased away the twilight. Stephen King leant his head on his hand and thought. Of what use was this boundless wealth to him? What could he get with it? What did other men get? Nothing worth the having. What could it bring him? Nothing at all. It didn't bring him rest; it could not even allay the pain of thought. He would give all for one moment's peace. He felt strangely ill and tired—wearied in body and soul. He was certainly ill, his brain was in a whirl, it seemed as though a sledge-hammer was beating it into pulp, and a noise—as though a thousand gongs were clashing in his head—seemed to be driving him mad. The room was becoming hazy and indistinct, all power of thought seemed to have left him, and a black mist came before him and shut out the red glow of the fire from his eyes. He sank back in his chair . . . his head pained him . . . it was more than he could bear, the noise inside it increased . . . it would kill him . . . would it never cease? . . . a roar and a crash, as though the earth had split asunder, and then came utter, blessed peace . . . He pillowed his head on his arms, his eyes closed and he fell asleep . . . and all was black as night . . .

Gradually the darkness lifted, and Stephen King looked up and found that he was sitting by a man who was—himself. It was strange, impossible. Such things did not happen in real life. But he was asleep and dreaming, and in dreams all things are possible.

Yet it was strange to be dreaming like this: he had not dreamt for years. It reminded him of his childhood. When quite young he had, like many children, suffered from too realistic dreams of horror, wherein he saw himself driven by nightmare destiny from one position

of danger and disgrace to the next, seeing himself as another being, enduring that being's torments and dishonour, yet powerless all the while to give aid or advice.

And now it seemed that his childish nightmare had returned to him after all these years. But what a strange dream it was! It had nothing to do with gold mines or railways.

Resigned to the phantom terrors that the dream undoubtedly had in store for him, he watched himself with a certain interest. He was in a hansom, seated by the other Stephen King, and they seemed to be driving rapidly eastwards. His own knowledge of London only extended as far as the City. The great East End was an unknown world to him, and he gazed about him curiously as he passed through dimly-lighted streets and foul slums, where want and misery were so apparent.

On, on they rolled, he and the Man at his side, past gaunt, black-shadowed archways and dingy little houses, with square holes for windows.

Squalid women stared at him with bleared eyes, and called after him with harsh laughter; children huddled together on the doorsteps, and sought shelter from the cold rain; drunkards staggered about on the slippery pavement, and reeled out of the way of the horse, shaking their fists at it and muttering curses. A mournful silence prevailed, save where a short fight was taking place outside a beer-shop, and a crowd had gathered round the combatants, urging them on with oaths and cries. The gas-light, burning dimly at the corner of the street, cast flickering shadows on their sallow faces. It was all wonderfully life-like, and Stephen King shuddered as he saw these things, but the Man at his side saw nothing; ever silent, he gazed before him with vacant eyes. The moon hung low in the sky like a ball of amber, and from time to time a black cloud sailed across it and hid it from his view. The streets grew narrower and more gloomy; the few gas lamps, blurred by the damp mist, gave forth the faintest spark of light. At last the cab drew up at the top of a dark lane. The Silent Man descended.





"SEATED BY THE OTHER STEPHEN KING"

Stephen felt impelled to do the same. The cabman drove quickly away. All that night Stephen remained by the other's side. He could not leave him. Some horrible influence compelled him to follow the Man who was so like himself. The Man led him into strange places: he saw sights that sickened and disgusted him. The dream quite came up to the recollection of what his childish nightmares had been. He saw poverty, crime, and vice steal forth from their hovels and rub shoulders with him—Stephen King the millionaire. But they did not seem to notice him; they had eyes only for the Silent Man.

Together they went into low, evil-

looking houses, where men and women sang, and drank, and danced until the night grew old with merriment. Sailors of all nations crept in like hunted animals; their cruel faces were sodden with drink, and they quarrelled with each other incessantly in queer, foreign tongues. And when the glare of the gas-lights began to pale before the grey dawn the Silent Man fell asleep in a chair. He had been drinking heavily, and his head was bent forward on his breast. Women looked at him and laughed.

Stephen gazed at him with tired eyes; he seemed to see himself as in a glass, and the reflection was not a pleasant



one. He began to wish that he could wake up. The dream no longer interested him; it had lost the charm of novelty. And the women crept away, and the Silent Man slept on, until at length some sailors spied him and began to whisper

rest, unbuttoned the sleeping man's coat and felt in the pockets of his waistcoat; he did this so roughly that the Man awoke, and, seeing that he was being robbed, sprang at the sailor who was bending over him. A sharp fight ensued.



"THE SILENT MAN HAD DRAWN A KNIFE"

to each other. After deliberating for a minute they came softly over to him, and began to feel in his pockets. Their eyes glittered, and a look of joy came into their cruel faces, for they found money in plenty. Gold, silver, and bank-notes they took from him.

At last one, more avaricious than the

The Silent Man struggled desperately: he uttered no cry, but his eyes flashed like diamonds, and the veins in his forehead stood out like knotted cords. But he was like to be overpowered, for he was wrestling with four strong men. Stephen felt sorry that he was being worsted in the fight, and he longed to be able to



help him, but he could not. A moment later he saw to his horror that the Silent Man had drawn a knife from his pocket and had stabbed the sailor who had robbed him. The man fell heavily.

Then the Silent Man breathed hard, and glared around him; he saw that the other sailors had taken long knives from their pockets and were coming towards him. With a spring like that of a wild cat he leapt at the nearest man and buried the blood-stained knife in his breast. The man staggered back, and sank into a chair with a deep groan. The Silent Man flung the knife on the ground and fled; and Stephen, glancing at it, saw that it had a quaint ivory handle, inlaid with gold and precious stones, and he recognised it as one that he had in his library at home.

He was horrified, but he told himself that it was but a dream, and he laughed at his bewilderment of the moment, and resigned himself to the old familiar position of onlooker at what he felt assured were the visionary fortunes of the Man who was so like himself. And so the dream went on with painful realism. He saw the Silent Man captured one night in a low lodging-house, and saw him later on tried for murder. He saw the dingy old court, the crowd of long-robed barristers, the grim face of the judge, and finally he heard the Silent Man condemned to death, and he felt sorry for him, for he knew that he was not really guilty of the awful crime of murder. But he whom he pitied seemed indifferent to the fate that awaited him; he never spoke a word, and his face was calm and impassive, as though it were a block of cold marble. Then, as the dream went on, he saw him sitting in his prison cell, and one morning he saw a man come in and bind his arms with rope, and a clergyman with a grave, sad face, spoke earnestly to him, but the Silent Man never answered a word; and they led him along a stone passage, and a bell tolled mournfully outside.

And Stephen, following behind him, began to be afraid, for he knew that the Silent Man was going to his death.

But he smiled to himself, for he re-

membered that it was but a vision, and he knew that he would soon wake up, and find everything as it had been when he fell asleep.

And he saw the Silent Man mount the gallows, and they put a white cloth over his head, and the clergyman prayed aloud.

And he was indeed afraid, and he said to himself, "I must awake!"

And then by a supreme struggle, by an effort of will which seemed to rend



"CONDEMNED"

him through and through, Stephen King assembled his being, and brought together that part of him which had been the onlooker, and his physical self—not to find himself sitting in the shaded radiance of his study, but standing he knew not where.

He felt that something was over his face, shutting out the light of Heaven from his eyes, and he tried to put up his hands to take away the thing that was over his head, but he could not do so, for his arms were bound tightly to his side. . . . He heard a man's voice uttering prayers, and the deep tone of a bell fell on his ears. And Stephen King cried aloud in his agony, for he knew that that which he had dreamt had been no dream, but that the Silent Man was—himself.



# *A Tragic Experiment*

WRITTEN BY H. PARK BOWDEN. ILLUSTRATED BY J. H. BACON

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“**H**A—AHA!”

The hearty, masculine laugh from the adjoining room made the girl start in her light slumber—for girl she still was in years, though a wedding-ring gleamed on one slender hand, while the other infolded the wee, bare foot of the sleeping infant at her side.

Another hilarious outburst, and she opened her eyes with a deep-drawn sigh. For some minutes she lay quite still, listening to the two voices in the next room. One was her husband's, speaking in quick, nervous jerks, as was his wont when excited; the other, which was characterised by a certain racy buoyancy, was strange to her ears.

“Another of his medical friends,” she thought, her straight, delicate brows contracting. For she felt instinctively that his fellow-students, all, more or less, held the opinion that Herman Churchill had committed the height of folly in hampering himself with a penniless wife, when he had barely wherewithal to support himself.

And this distressing conviction was ever attended by a still more distressing presentiment that, sooner or later, he would himself become imbued with their opinion—would rue the day when he had set love above ambition. Already a reserved constraint was beginning to mark his manner towards her.

O why, she asked herself sadly, why did she ever let her heart be swayed by his passionate protest: “If you let your uncle marry—or, rather, sell you to that old reprobate—you will ruin your own life and mine. I don't care a jot for success unless I can share it with you—my wife!”

And yet, remembering the flood of tenderness that had overflowed her soul as she listened to that sudden caressing

cadence in his vehement voice, she could not but feel that love would again prove all-prevailing, could she re-live that fateful hour in the peaceful, old mausoleum garden.

“O baby, if I could only help him, could only do something to prove my love—and strengthen his!” she murmured, pressing her cheek to the little dark head beside her.

Then she gently loosened the grasp of the tiny, pink fingers that had closed on the girdle of her robe, and quietly rose from the bed. Going to a quaintly-framed old mirror, she arranged her short, ruffled curls, which, being fair and soft as floss silk, formed a sort of aureole about her small, well-shaped head. The extreme paleness of her complexion strikingly intensified the clear, rich colouring of her eyes—

Deep and Dark,  
Solemn and true,  
Pansy eyes  
Of the noblest blue.

Presently she moved to the arched, ornate window, and stepped out on the balcony—one of those marvels of carved woodwork that beautify the streets of Lahore; and resting her arms on the latticed parapet, she looked listlessly down on the narrow Oriental street that she had thought so quaint and picturesque when first she came here after her runaway marriage.

Three rooms over a lapidary's shop! It had sorely vexed the poor but proud medical student that he should have no better home to offer the daintily-nurtured girl. However, by dint of various bargains among the neighbouring bric-à-brac shops, he had made two of the scantily-furnished rooms replete with artistic beauty. The third he reserved as his own special den, where he pursued his medical studies. This room also



opened on to the balcony; and the voices of the two men within came with audible distinctness through the open doorway, near which stood a flowering shrub.

"But just consider, twenty thousand deaths annually from snake-bite—and you question whether my experiment is justifiable!"

The raised excited tones of her husband's voice rang out clearly. With a curiosity bordering on apprehension she moved towards the window listening intently.

"Now don't blaze out like that, old fellow: the thermometer and my nerves forbid it! Since you place such faith in this antitoxin you are naturally bent on making the final test; but I can't say my confidence in its efficacy comes up to yours—I should be sorry indeed to submit myself to cobra virus, as you so coolly talk of doing."

As the good-humoured, pacifying reply fell on her ear, horror blanched her face to an ashy pallor; and she was taking an impulsive step forward to enter the room when she was arrested by his friend putting the question that throbbed in her brain.

"And when do you intend making this experiment on yourself?"

"Not until after the 24th—the anniversary of my wedding-day."

The pause that followed was terribly eloquent to her. Despite the confidence he had evidently professed, he must certainly fear that this horrible experiment, whatever it was, might prove fatal. He would not hazard the chance of that day finding her—a *widow*. She leant, faint and trembling, against the framework of the door, concealed from their view by the thick foliage of the syringa.

"Aye, what about your wife and child? What would become of them if the worst should happen?"

"They would be well provided for. In that case the Maharajah would settle an annuity of 10,000 rupees on her—more than I could earn for many a year to come if I were to peg on in the ordinary way."

All the chafing bitterness against poverty and obscurity that she knew had

long rankled in his breast, seemed concentrated in that short sentence.

"But if, as is far more likely," he continued quickly, "the test fulfils my expectations, he intends establishing an institution to be devoted to the practice of my discovery."

"Well, he can't do more than that, certainly—unless he would allow the ultra test to be made on his august self!"

"And now, Rutland, I want you to be a witness when I make it."

"Good Heavens, man, don't ask me that! I'd a hundred times rather stand second in the most bloodthirsty duel."

"I am sorry you feel like that about it, for you are the only friend I have, except the fellows at the hospital; and I would rather not take any of them into my confidence. Won't you think better of it and give me your promise?"

"Since you put it in that light, old fellow, I will pocket my scruples rather than leave you in the lurch. And now you are duly inoculated, I suppose there is nothing more to be done until you make this experiment. But where shall you make it—here?"

"Yes, Bedeen, the snake-charmer lives overhead, and he has a cobra among his collection whose poison fangs have not been extracted. In fact, that is one of the reptiles from which I have obtained the virus I've used in immunising the horse—one the Maharajah placed at my service some months back. Of course, you won't mention this to my wife. I haven't breathed a word of it to her," he added, his enthusiastic tone suddenly subdued to one of compunctious constraint.

"So I concluded—else she would have prevailed on you to abandon it."

"Abandon it—never! This is no pet hobby, man; it is the master passion of my life!"

The short, decisive avowal made her shrink as from a blow. Of what use to raise her appeal as wife and mother? Ambition ruled supreme in his breast, and this awful venture of his promised to crown it with honour—promised to raise him above the dead level of struggling poverty. And on the chance



of that promise being fulfilled, he was prepared to stake his life. But did her anguish and desolation count naught?

Stifling the rising sob in her throat, she again bent forward as the stranger's voice broke the silence.

"Well, we must hope that she will soon know of it as an invaluable discovery that will rank her husband with Pasteur and Behring. Inoculation against cobra-bite would be a boon indeed to India and every snake-ridden country. Going? I should say so—I must be at Government House by four o'clock."

There was a movement within the room, a few parting words, and a minute later she saw a soldierly-looking young fellow hurry away down the street.

Her first impulse was to go straight to her husband and beseech him to desist from this horrible experiment. But then there rang through her head those sharp, determinate words: "Abandon it—never!" And a tragic sense of the immutability of his purpose, the utter impotence of any such appeal benumbed her heart.

But the next minute it bounded anew as a sudden, point-blank thought glared upon her brain. For one moment she quailed, then faced it stedfastly, bravely, aye even gladly, as a revelation empowering her to "prove her love and strengthen his."

A look of strong resolve subduing the agitation of her face, she turned and entered the room she had dignified with the name of "laboratory."

He was in his shirt-sleeves bending

over a table littered with bottles, retorts, mortars and various instruments.

He looked round with a start that showed to what a pitch of nervous excitement he had been wrought by his recent discussion. Indeed, the fire of it was still flushing his thin, dark face, still burning in his deep-set, grey eyes.



"DRAWING UP HER LOOSE SLEEVE"

"So you have had your nap, little one—but I am afraid it hasn't done you much good; you look as white as a witch!" he said, taking her face between his hands, and looking down on it with a remorseful intentness, that would have roused her wonderment but for the terrible knowledge she had just gleaned.

"Do I, Herman; I suppose it's the heat," she replied carelessly. "But who



has been with you? I was on the balcony just now and saw him leave."

"O—you mean Captain Rutland. I hope to introduce him to you the next time he calls," he answered, meeting her upraised eyes with an uneasy look. "I would have done so now, had I known you were on the balcony. How long have you been there?"

"Only a minute or two, but long enough to hear that you have made some wonderful discovery that will make cobra-bite harmless. I caught a few words, and then I couldn't resist listening. Why have you never said anything about it to me?" she added, with an assumed touch of pique.

He was silent for half a minute, wondering how much of their conversation she had heard, and casting about in his mind how to answer her so as to divulge nothing of the dangerous nature of his enterprise.

"Because, sweet Inquisitor, I wanted to ascertain that the treatment does indeed confer immunity before I raised your hopes. At present it is doubtful whether it will prove a success or failure."

"And when shall you know?" she asked, keeping her eyes the while on the pestle she was fingering.

"Not until—until someone who has been inoculated happens to be bitten."

She drew her breath quickly.

"Then I suppose you will be anxious to get as many people as possible inoculated?"

At this question a look of relief relaxed the harassed contraction of his dark, heavily-marked brows. Evidently she had only heard their closing remarks.

"Just so. As soon as I have obtained my diploma I must scout for patients," he said, adopting a light tone. And turning away, he applied himself to arranging some bottles on a shelf.

The next minute her hand was laid on his arm.

"Let me be your first patient, Herman; I want you to inoculate me."

"You!" he exclaimed, swinging round and looking at her blankly.

"Yes, me. Preparing is preventing, you know," she said, attempting a smile

that quickly died on her lips. "I suppose it is much the same as being vaccinated?" she added, drawing up her loose sleeve.

"Yes, but not now, Muriel mine—wait until you are stronger." And stooping, he tenderly kissed the rounded softness of her arm, and drew down her sleeve. But she pushed it up again with a show of petulance.

"No, no, you must do it now. I won't be refused!"

He stood irresolute, being, in fact, in an awkward dilemma; knowing as he did that in her state of health she must not be thwarted; and that by the same reason the injection of the serum might be attended by danger. But he quickly perceived there was a middle course open to him: he must practise a little deception.

"You are a very headstrong little woman!" he said, assuming a yielding manner. And going to a side table, he hastily browned some water to the similitude of serum. Then returning to her side, he proceeded to make a subcutaneous injection beneath her milk-white skin.

"Have you had this idea in your mind long?" she asked, as he carefully used the hypodermic syringe.

"About eighteen months or so. You have heard me speak of the Maharajah? Well, he has taken the keenest interest in the subject; and has, I believe, every confidence in my success. He used to come to the hospital to see how a servant of his who had met with an accident was getting on. One morning, Houghton, the head surgeon, introduced me to his Highness, and since then he has often had a chat with me. On one occasion he told me that he had lost his only son through his being bitten by a cobra; and then I was led to tell him how I was bent on this—but you are trembling from head to foot! There's not the least danger in this, my own, else I would not do it for the world!"

If he had but known what was the bitter prevision that was overwhelming her soul—he, a bereaved, grief-stricken man, bending over her lifeless body.

"There, *dearissima*, you have been a



pattern patient," he said, pressing his lips to her cold, damp forehead.

"Will one injection be sufficient?" she asked, with a quivering lip, as she drew down her sleeve.

"Quite sufficient," he answered, not without a twinge of conscience at so imposing on her faith. "And now, my sweet, you had better go and lie down again for a bit with the kiddy. I wonder he hasn't been piping for his mother long before this."

A spasm as of acutest pain contracted her delicate features as he mentioned the child; and without another word she hastened from the room.

\* \* \* \*

"And about what time do you think you will be home, Herman?"

"That will all depend on the Professor's longwindedness; but I daresay I shall be back by seven o'clock."

"Seven, and now it is just four," she said slowly, looking at the little bronze clock with an expression that fairly puzzled him, such shrinking dread did it betray. She had never before taken his leaving her so much to heart. But doubtless, like himself, she had been counting on their spending this red-letter day—the anniversary of their wedding—in close companionship.

"I wish to my heart I were not obliged to leave you, Muriel mine. I am afraid the time will hang heavy on your hands, and I am sure that young Nabob will," noticing with concern how pale and exhausted she looked as she lifted the open-eyed infant from his cradle and held him up for his father to kiss.

Was it the last time she would see him caress the child she had borne him?

The question held her mute.

"Good-bye, sweet wife, I will sheer off home as soon as I possibly can. And after dinner we will go for a quiet stroll together—you don't get out enough, I am sure!"

And drawing wife and child within his arms he tenderly kissed the tiny baby face, and the one that was so strangely pale and wistful,

—Solemn with unutterable thought,  
And love and aspiration.

"O, my baby, is it for the last, the last time?" she moaned, as from the balcony she watched him going down the street, his tall athletic figure dwarfing all those he passed. On reaching the corner he looked back and waved his hand. The next moment he was lost to sight.



"DRAWING WIFE AND CHILD WITHIN HIS  
ARMS"

The child cooed and stretched his little limbs within her arms, as though to call her attention to himself. How those little inarticulate sounds smote her heart!

Returning to the room she touched a handbell. It was answered by a native girl, the lapidary's daughter, who for a slender wage had gladly undertaken the duties of nurse to the little new-comer.

She at once produced a feeding-bottle from some folds of flannel, for to



Muriel's grief the dearest prerogative of motherhood had been denied her. But now she felt that had it been otherwise she could not have risked a danger that might leave the little one motherless.

Her bosom heaved at the thought, as she laid him in his cradle and placed the mouthpiece between his eager lips.

For some minutes after the ayah had left the room she knelt by his side watching him contentfully absorbing the milk.

At last, with a long quivering breath she rose to her feet, and seating herself at a table she drew some writing materials before her.

But she had not written half-a-dozen lines when the pen dropped from her nerveless fingers, and she bowed her face on her arm in a paroxysm of anguish.

For some while her bitter sobs mingled with the child's gurgling suction, which suddenly gave place to a wailing cry.

In an instant she was bending over the cradle, stifling her grief in order to croon a lullaby. After a time, the little fellow dropped asleep; but his half-closed, azure-gleaming eyes seemed to be keeping an appealing watch on her, while his wee, hot fingers tightly grasped one of hers, as if they strove to withhold her from her dread purpose—strove to bind her to life, and all its sweet obligations.

Her face worked with the conflictive emotions convulsing her heart. But yearningly tender as was her love towards the child, it was an infinitely surpassing love that urged her to take her life in her hands, and, if needs be, lay it down as a saving sacrifice.

The little clock chimed five. She started and shivered.

"One hour gone—Bedeem will be back soon. I must be quick."

But for yet another minute she hung over the cradle, watching, with dry, burning eyes, the little flushed cheek, the moist coral lips, and the tiny dark circlets of hair on his fair baby brow.

Returning to the table, she finished her letter in feverish haste; and having folded and addressed it to her husband, she again rang the bell.

"I want you to sit by baby, Zeziah," she said, when the girl appeared; "and

if my husband returns before I do, give him this."

The girl promised to do so, looking with wonder the while at her mistress's drawn, blanched face.

Not trusting herself to even glance towards the cradle, Muriel left the room, and slowly mounted the narrow, winding stairs that led to the house-top, where she knew Bedeen was wont to let his snakes bask during the sunny hours. He only exhibited his craft in the morning, so she could count on finding the reptiles at home—and the man himself absent; for, business over, it was his habit to seek the pleasures of the café over the way.

Another minute, and she stood on the broad, parapeted space, in a flood of amber sunshine. Shading her eyes, she looked shrinkingly around, drawing her breath sharply as her gaze encountered two closely-wired cages—one containing a large cobra-de-capello, the other a number of rat-snakes.

And now the manifold coils of the cobra stirred, and, rearing its head, it fixed a pair of small glittering eyes on her.

She stood still as a statue, her gaze held in horrible fascination; and despite the warmth of the sunshine, an icy numbness seized her limbs and gripped her heart.

Averting her eyes with an effort, she looked away at the golden dome of a distant mosque, above which a flock of white pigeons were softly hovering. The fair, peaceful sight stilled, in a measure, the panic in her breast, and turning, she moved slowly over the well-worn tiles towards the deadly reptile.

It was still rearing its head in watchful alertness, and as she drew near, it expanded its hood, and darted out a slender, forked tongue.

She shrank back a pace, intertwining her fingers in an agony of repugnance. Had it been a poisoned potion she must drink, she would not have flinched; but to meet death in this form, to let those venomous fangs fasten in her flesh—what wonder that every nerve quivered, every instinct recoiled.

She closed her eyes and bowed her



head in agonised prayer. But the next minute the twanging of a vina and a man's strong, gay voice rose distractingly from the street below.

Her hands dropped from her damp, white face, and with a quick movement she stepped to the cage and thrust her fingers between the wires.

At first the enraged cobra swayed its head from side to side, emitting at the same time a low, threatening noise. Suddenly the movement was suspended, the head being held in erect fixity. Then, swift as a lance, it darted forward.

\* \* \* \*

"I hope nothing ails her. It's seldom she fails to be on the look-out for me—though, to be sure, I'm more than an hour late," said Herman Churchill to himself, as he sent an eager look ahead to the carved wooden balcony from which his fair young wife had so often smiled a welcome on him.

It was long since he had returned home with so light a step, for the grim danger that had clouded his ambitious hopes had been summarily swept aside by the most signal success. On reaching the Mayo Hospital that afternoon he had found that a cobra-bitten field labourer had just been admitted. In preparation for such an accident Churchill had for some time past provided himself with a phial of the immunised serum; and now, as the man was evidently beyond ordinary treatment, the doctors consented to try this new remedy. The serum was accordingly injected, and speedily manifested its antagonising

power to the anxious eyes of the medical watchers.

Their warm congratulations when the patient's recovery was ensured still rung in the young fellow's ears, adding to his eagerness to impart this long hoped-for



"INTERTWINING HER FINGERS IN AN AGONY OF REPUGNANCE"

success to his wife. With no longer a compunctious reluctance to meet her earnest gaze, he hastened on into the house, and up the stairs to their sitting-room.

The ayah was pacing the room, the baby in her arms, and a troubled look on her swarthy face.



"SHE LAY STRETCHED, QUIET AND  
MOTIONLESS"



In reply to his anxious inquiries after his wife she said that she thought her mistress had gone out, and handed him the note she had left for him.

Tearing it open he eagerly scanned the unevenly written, incoherently worded message:

"Forgive me, Herman, my husband, if I have done wrong, but I cannot let you risk it. I overheard more than you thought the other day when Captain Rutland was with you. I heard how you are bent on making an experiment that may cost you your life—how no appeal of mine could induce you to abandon it.

"To lose you, the love of my life, the father of my child—the fear of it was like a knife in my heart. I felt as if I should lose my reason, until I saw that I need not stand helplessly by; I could step between you and danger—could test your discovery on myself.

"And so I persuaded you to inoculate me. If it should fail I would infinitely rather die for you, my Herman, than live without you. My whole being is bound up in yours.

"When I have written this I am going up on the roof. I know Bedeen keeps his cobra there——"

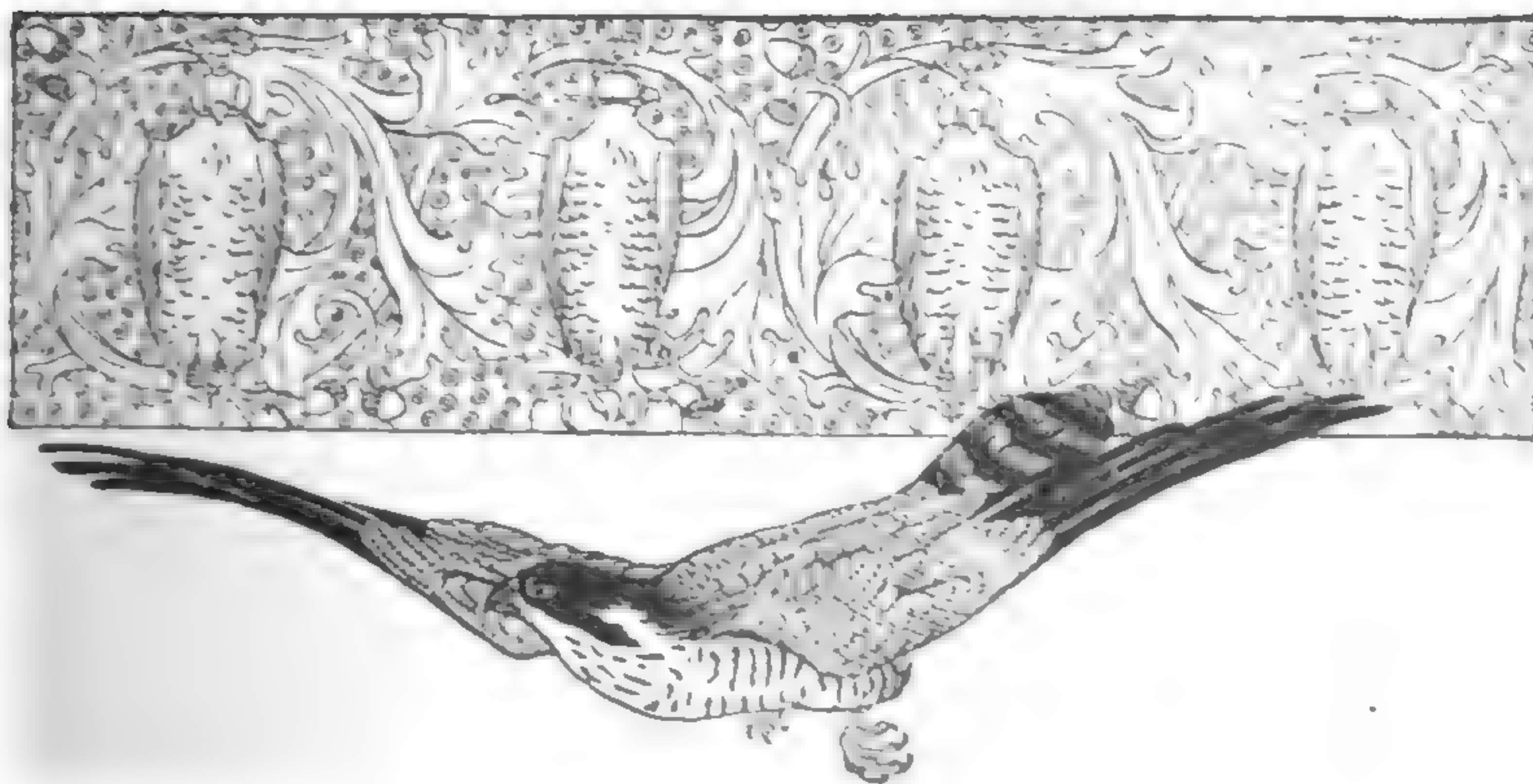
He waited to read no further, but still grasping the letter dashed from the room, up the stairs, and out on the house-top.

And there the dreaded sight confronted his starting eyes.

She lay stretched, quiet and motionless, close by the cobra's cage, her deathly white face turned up to the sunset glow—that was powerless to soften its frozen look of horror.

With an agonised groan he caught hold of her rigid hands and closely examined them. But the small, red punctures he dreaded to see were nowhere visible. Then, as he marked the absence of any symptom of poisoning, it dawned on his frenzied brain that a Heaven-sent swoon had timely prevented her self-sacrifice; and he caught her to his breast in a passion of thankful joy.

A tremor of limb and quiver of eyelid told him that consciousness was returning to her, and the next minute their eyes were meeting once more in perfected love.





# *The Tale of a Terrier*

WRITTEN BY HENRY MARTLEY. ILLUSTRATED BY A. S. HARTRICK

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**W**HEN Professor Etlinger fell in love, he did not behave himself as an elderly scientist should. Fiction has taught us to know and love the elderly scientist under the circumstances. The white-haired benevolent old man emerges from lifelong studies in his laboratory, and his eyes fall dreamily through his spectacles on a fresh young girl. Two endings are then possible. Either the fresh young girl marries another man and the Professor sees his mistake and goes pathetically back to his laboratory, or, another and more popular ending, she proposes to him in a charming winsome way, because he is too absent-minded to do so himself.

But, as I say, Professor Etlinger behaved himself unprofessionally. Perhaps he felt that, being neither white-haired nor benevolent, nor endowed with spectacles, he could not act the part properly. Also, though he possessed a laboratory where he made strange smells, he had not lived there all his life. As a matter of fact, he was an exceedingly wide-awake grizzled man, who from his conversation, we gathered, had seen most places in the world. Who he was we did not exactly know. I have always suspected him of being a German, though he denied the accusation, and spoke English perfectly. We were also ignorant of his reasons for settling in Elm-borough. Some of the inhabitants conjectured him to be a coiner, seeking quiet, while others attributed his presence to the excellence of our gravel soil. Personally I had never troubled myself about him till it became apparent that he was paying attentions to Elsie Wilmot. It seemed exceedingly silly of so clever a man to do such a thing, because the announcement of Elsie's engagement to Jack Anstruther was a mere matter of

weeks: but the Professor did begin to pay her attention, and he did it rather well. When he chose to talk he was the best talker that I ever heard. I looked on with amusement at the duel, knowing that girls do not fall in love even with the best books of travels.

About half way through the Long Vacation Jack proposed and was accepted. I met him on his way back from the Wilmots on the day of the fateful event, and he was as deliriously excited as though it had been totally unexpected. After giving him my congratulations and listening to his ravings for a few minutes, I resumed my walk. Shortly afterwards I sighted the Professor ahead of me, and I chuckled maliciously. When I had overtaken him and had passed the time of day with him, I inquired whether he had heard the news? These I told him as flatly and plumply as I could. Being a man of the world he managed to conceal his feelings fairly well, but there was a look about his eyes which somewhat surprised me. It was a look more of amusement than anger. I concluded that he had taken his defeat philosophically as a part of the futility of the female mind.

In a day or two Jack told me casually that Miss Wilmot had lost her fox terrier Gipsy, and was greatly disturbed at the loss. At the time I made some foolish remark about the course of true love, and thought no more of the matter. After a few days I went with Jack to the Wilmots one Sunday afternoon, and then for the first time I began to be puzzled.

As we walked up the drive to the house I heard Mrs. Wilmot's voice from the window, "Elsie, please come in and sit down. You've been doing nothing but run up and down the lawn for the last half hour."





“‘I’M CERTAIN THERE’S A MOUSE ON THE CURTAIN’”

I smiled, for I knew Miss Wilmot ordinarily to be lazy and languorous, and I made a mental note of the impatience of lovers.

She came round the corner of the house and I remarked a change in her.

Her walk I knew well, but that day she moved with a kind of slouch. When we came into the house I still observed her, and there was an unaccountable something about her which disturbed me. We had been talking politely to



Mrs. Wilmot for a few minutes, when Elsie suddenly exclaimed :

"Mother, I'm certain there's a mouse on the curtain."

Poor Mrs. Wilmot stood up and drew her dress about her with apprehension.

Elsie got down on her knees to examine the curtain.

"O, Jack," she exclaimed, "isn't it fun? Won't we just kill it if we can get it?"

"Elsie, come here," said Jack with a pained look and almost roughly. I had known Elsie from childhood, and from my knowledge of her I should not have thought Jack's tone was exactly the way to persuade her. However, she got up submissively and came back to her chair.

"Have you heard anything of Gipsy?" I asked, wishing to change the conversation.

"Nothing," answered Mrs. Wilmot.

"You must miss him dreadfully, Elsie," I suggested.

"O, Gipsy?" she said jauntily; "I don't know that I ever cared much for the little beast. He used to run about on four legs and bark and that kind of thing."

"Why, of course he walked about on four legs," I answered with a puzzled feeling.

"Of course," she said hastily and flushed. "I say, Jack, don't you think we might all go for a good, fast walk? Do let's be jolly and sensible."

Mrs. Wilmot saved Jack from the good, fast walk, and I soon afterwards took my leave. I was not exactly happy in my mind about the engagement; but Jack said nothing, and I concluded that I had intervened in an interval of difference of opinion, and that Elsie was merely teasing Jack in an elaborate way.

After a week or two Jack and I returned to Oxford—we were both at the same college. Jack was moody and abstracted, but a young man takes even his most intimate friend as he finds him, and I thought little of the subject. However, about a fortnight after the beginning of term, Jack and I were loafing in his rooms when we noticed the sound of a disturbance in the Lodge.

We heard the porter objurgating and the yelp of a kicked and frightened dog. He moved to the window and looked out.

"No," he gasped; "it can't be. Yes, it is. Gipsy!"

He ran into the Quad, and sure enough it was Gipsy, who was being pursued by an enraged porter, assisted by two amused scouts. The dog rushed up to him and leaped round him with wild cries of joy. Jack picked him up and carried him to his rooms, regardless of the porter. He fed him and laid him on the sofa. Gipsy slept uneasily, and at intervals raised his head and gazed at Jack with a wistful, yearning look. Jack could not understand the matter. The animal was splashed and draggled, and had evidently travelled a long way.

"What the deuce does it all mean?" asked Jack. "It seemed as if he came to look for me. But that's absurd, the beast always used to hate me. By-the-by, I hope it is Gipsy, and not some other man's dog."

He rose and looked at the collar. Yes, there plain enough was Elsie's name and address.

"Poor little beast," said he; "how did he get here?"

The dog licked his face in a wild ecstasy of affection.

"By Jove, it is queer. But I can't keep him here. I must get someone in the town to keep him till I can send him back to Elsie."

After lunch Jack and I sallied out with the dog to seek a temporary home for the latter in a neighbouring stable. In the porch we stopped to read the notices on the board, and turned to behold before us, Briggs, our junior dean, who had lately entered on his duties as Proctor. Briggs was an unpleasant, fussy person, even as an ordinary Don, and he had been exercising the authority of his newly-acquired office in a way that disgraced even a Proctor.

"Your dog, Mr. Anstruther?" he inquired, with a savage look at Gipsy, who slunk timidly away.

"The animal," he continued, acidly, as it tried to edge out of the door, "appears



to have a better acquaintance with the college regulations than its master. Are you not aware that dogs are forbidden in college?"

"Well," replied Jack, "I am taking him out. The rule only says that dogs must not be brought in."

"Your remark, sir," said Briggs, severely, "is an impertinent quibble."

"I'm exceedingly sorry, Mr. Briggs," answered Jack, "but this dog has come a long way to see me, and there are circumstances — private circumstances

—which have led me to break the rules."

"Mr. Anstruther," rejoined the Proctor, savagely, "I have already expressed my opinion of your conduct in bringing the dog into college, and you don't diminish your offence by inventing frivolous excuses. You shall hear more of this, sir. Your attendance at chapel has been very irregular, and I strongly suspect that you were one of those who were playing football in the Quadrangle last night."

"At least," said Anstruther, getting angry, "I don't want to hear any more of it now. Will you kindly allow me to obey the rules by taking my dog out of college at once?"

"I don't know about that," piped Briggs, in his squeaky voice. He had already made his term of office memorable by some absurd regulations about undergraduates' dogs and hydrophobia. "I don't like the look of that dog of yours at all. It seems to me to have several symptoms of hydrophobia, and if, as you say, and the dog's appearance suggests, it has travelled a long way, it may have come from some infected district. I'm strongly inclined to have it killed under the new regulations."

Gipsy uttered a low growl.

"It is," said the Proctor, "a most dangerous dog. You must have it examined at once, and it's my opinion that it ought to be killed."

Then were the hearts of several undergraduates gladdened by the sight of a fat and angry Proctor pursued across the Quad by a fox-terrier, with bristling mane and angry voice. Terror gave Briggs speed for some twenty



"PURSUED ACROSS THE QUAD BY A TERRIER"



yards, but then he remembered his dignity, and Zeus put it into the heart of the outraged man to stop and kick. The dog fixed its teeth in the fleshy part of his calf, worried it sharply, and then trotted back to Jack. The victim nursed his wounded limb for a moment or two, and rose and walked gravely into the Lodge.

"Mr. Anstruther," he said stiffly, "you have displayed conduct lacking that respect which every gentleman owes to every lady. I must ask you to take me back to my mother."

"Good Heavens!" murmured Jack to me. "The old boy's so frightened that he's gone a little dotty. I'll get Gipsy out of the way, if you'll see after Briggs."

I helped him up his staircase. He seemed dazed, and once took off his cap and looked at it in a puzzled way. I thought I heard him mutter "What a bonnet!" but I was not sure. However, on reaching his rooms, he pulled himself together, and dismissed me with his usual dignity, assuring me, as was the fact, that the wound was a slight one.

I had been dining at another college, and was returning late, congratulating myself that, though I was without cap and gown, the dog-bite would keep old Briggs from lurking near the college, as was his habit. However, to my annoyance, when I turned a corner, I ran straight into that functionary and his bulldogs, and I mentally anathematised his excessive sense of duty.

"Proctor wishes to speak to you, sir," said a bulldog.

"But, my dear Marshal," I heard the Proctor say hurriedly in a low tone to that official, "what will people say if I am seen talking to young men in the streets at night?"

"Why, sir," replied the Marshal with some astonishment, "I dunno' as how they'll say anything different to what they allus does."

"But they'll say such dreadful things about me," persisted the Proctor.

"Well, sir," said the other with a suppressed chuckle, "gentlemen allus does speak rather severely of the Proctor, axing your pardon, sir."

Briggs gave a start, pressed his hand

to his forehead and said, "Of course, of course." Then he turned to me and inquired rather tremulously: "Are you a member of this University, sir?"

I gave him my name and college, thinking it rather an unnecessary formality considering how well he knew me.

"Well, Mr. Trevor, I must ask you to call on me to-morrow at ten," he began. Then a spasm shot across his face. "I mean—hee-hee-hee—my mother would be very pleased if you'd drop in after breakfast to-morrow."

He blushed deeply and cast down his eyes. I looked at the Marshal; the Marshal gazed at me. We both turned our eyes in consternation at the Proctor. There was an awkward silence. Then the Marshal said: "Hadn't you better be getting home, sir?" adding to me in an undertone that Mr. Briggs was very queer that night.

"Yes," simpered the Proctor, "I really think I must be going now. *Au revoir*, Mr. Trevor, don't forget to call on us."

I went back to college filled with mystification; a horrible suspicion was beginning to enter my mind, and I thought over it for awhile. Then I decided to visit Chatterjee. Chatterjee was an elderly Indian who lived in the back Quad, and I was rather interested in him. I dabbled a little in hypnotism, and had discussed with him that question and other questions connected with the unseen. He could certainly do some curious tricks. Chatterjee was, fortunately, still up; and when I had told him the facts that led to my suspicion, he replied:

"There's only one thing I don't understand about it. Is there anyone in your part of the country who knows anything?"

"I suppose you mean a person who's been to India?" I said.

"Quite so," he replied.

It then flashed across me that Professor Etlinger had been in India for several years, and that he had been in love with Elsie.

"It's quite clear now," he said. "I can prove it easily."

He poured some ink into a slop-basin, and asked me to look firmly at it. In a



few minutes I saw in a blurred mist the forms of Elsie and Gipsy. What is more, I could hear them speak to each other.

"What is to be done, Gipsy?" asked Elsie.

"I don't know," said Gipsy, with a dejected depression of his tail. "I want to go back and be a terrier again."

"And I want to be a girl," wailed Elsie.

"I suppose you'd like it," said Gipsy.

he said he could give me a much better one, and who do you think it was?"

"Who?" asked Elsie.

"Why, that little brute Jowler that I could lick any day—and I will, too, if ever I can get back again. I told the Squire I'd kill him if he said such a thing again, and he went away rather hastily."

"O, Gipsy!" said Elsie, reproachfully.

"That's it," said Gipsy. "I never can



"CHATTERJEE TOOK THE BOWL AWAY"

"I did at first; but I find it awfully slow. One always has to be sitting down, and one isn't allowed to shout. Besides, there's that horrid little curate, who will come and talk about Browning and Ruskin and people like that."

"Poor Gipsy," said Elsie, "even I could hardly stand him."

"And then," continued Gipsy, "there's that horrid old Squire. What do you think the old brute said the other day? He told me that I oughtn't to mind losing that terrier of mine, because he was such a badly bred little beast. And

be allowed to behave sensibly. Why, I was just having a rat-hunt in the pigsty ——"

Then Chatterjee took the bowl away.

"It's perfectly simple," he said. "Professor Etlinger stole the dog, and changed its soul with the girl's soul. That is child's play to a man who knows anything. Then the dog escaped and bit Briggs, and when a man-beast like that—there are hundreds of them in my country—bites anyone, that person always gets a sort of human hydrophobia from the dog."



"It's too horrible," I said. "Can nothing be done? Is there no cure?"

"O, the cure is quite simple," he said: "if the dog bites the girl, the souls would change again."

"And what about Briggs?" I asked.

"O, he would recover. And," he added, "Professor Etlinger would die. It's a risky thing to do what he's done. That's why you hear of it so seldom. If you want a cure, just let me speak to the dog for a few minutes, and then send it to the girl."

I thanked Chatterjee, and soon afterwards went to bed with my head in a whirl. Next day Chatterjee interviewed Gipsy for a few minutes, and I induced Jack to telegraph and send the dog home by the afternoon train.

Two days afterwards Jack got a letter from Elsie. I had ceased to be surprised at anything, and only recognised the obvious when Jack informed me that Gipsy had bitten her, that she was in such delight at recovering the dog that she took the occurrence as a joke, and that Professor Etlinger had died suddenly. That ended quite happily, perhaps, the oddest episode that I can vouch for as true from personal knowledge. I have only to add that Briggs had to resign his Proctorship, and retired to the country for awhile, but returned afterwards no worse and no better for what the doctors declared to be a slight nervous derangement brought on by overwork.



THE RIVER OF DREAMS



# Heaps of Lots

WRITTEN BY ANGUS EVAN ABBOTT. ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL HARDY



O be sure you all remember that beautifully clear night last week when all the clouds had gone away over to America to see their friends, and there was not the least little bit of fog even above the Serpentine, and when so many tiny stars were awake and winking at all the little girls and boys who looked out of the window before being tucked up warm in bed. I think it must have been those little, mischievous, winking stars that put the idea into the heads of the two naughty Landseer Lions (Mr. Strand Lion, whose nose points towards the Strand, and Mr. Piccadilly Lion, whose nose points towards Pall Mall, you know) to go and get the statues of our good kings and queens and griffins and things into such an awful mess. It was all on account of a 'bus, too, and the little children of London saw the most tremendous smash-up when all was finished that had ever been. You know I think those Landseer Lions do nothing but just lie about in Trafalgar Square and look good, and spend the whole of the day in thinking what wicked things they will do next.

Of course, it was Mr. Strand Lion that really thought out the plot, for he has the brains, and Mr. Piccadilly Lion hasn't, but is an awfully jolly fellow, and does whatever Mr. Strand Lion tells him to do. The night I tell you of these two lions waited until all the little girls and boys had kissed their mammas and daddas "good-night," and were warmly tucked up in blankets, and then Mr. Strand Lion he gives a monstrous yawn. That wakens Mr. Piccadilly Lion up and makes him growl, for he

doesn't like to waken up early, and says he's very tired. But Mr. Strand Lion is wide awake, and I am pretty sure that if any little girl had happened to be near Nelson's Column at that time the bad lion would have gobbled her up pretty quickly. But, to be sure, all good little folk were sound asleep, excepting only some who had aches inside from having eaten something when no one was looking, and they had their mammas and nurses sitting beside them giving them peppermint and scoldings; so they were all right.

After a time Mr. Piccadilly Lion lays his head down on his front paws, and he looks ever so sleepily at Mr. Strand Lion and scarcely wags his tail, he is so very lazy. But Mr. Strand Lion he hops off the big block of granite, and, carrying one hind leg in his hand just the way you see a dog do, he goes "hopperty-hop, hopperty-hop" round Trafalgar Square ever so quietly to see whether he can find a little fat boy to eat. But the fairies that play in the fountains they had told the little boys all to run off home, and so the cruel lion did not find anything to eat. Presently he comes back and looks up at Mr. Piccadilly Lion, and he says:

"Hullo, Dilly, how are you to-night?"

Mr. Piccadilly Lion he is still very sleepy, and he growls a little and murmurs, "Leave me alone, please," and "don't bother me for a few minutes."

So Mr. Strand Lion hops round the column and pulls the other two lions' tails just to vex them, for they are good lions, and do not go galloping all over London after dark like Mr. Strand Lion and Mr. Piccadilly Lion do. The two good Landseer Lions, of course, start up when their tails are pulled, and they tell Mr. Strand Lion to go and sit up in his proper place like a good lion, but, of



course, he only laughs and says: "By-and-bye, milk-sops, I'll be good by-and-bye." Now, that is what all bad people keep saying, you know.

and gives it such a fright that it nearly pitches the King over its head, for, as usual, Mr. King Charles was thinking of himself and didn't know what was going



"NEARLY PITCHES THE KING OVER ITS HEAD"

Away scurried the bad Strand Lion, and he creeps up to Mr. King Charles' horse, and when the King don't know anything about it, he all at once sticks a great sharp claw into the poor horse

on under him. Mr. King Charles scolds Mr. Strand Lion, but the Lion ups and says he's the British Lion and never did care a snap of his fingers for Mr. King Charles. When Mr. Piccadilly Lion



hears this he wakens up right smartly, for living in the West End he is very loyal, and says: "Why, you East End radical, you haven't fingers to snap;" but Mr. Strand says, as saucy as you please: "Then I snap the fingers I haven't got; see if that will please you!"

By this time both Lions have their manes on end, and their tails straight out, and their eyes glaring, and it looks as though they were going to have an awful row; but presently Mr. Strand Lion glances over his shoulder and then says: "What are you going to do to-night, Dilly?" and Mr. Dilly lets his mane fall down all smooth again and says: "I don't know quite what to do, I feel awfully bored," and he yawns an awful yawn, politely putting his paw up to his lips, of course.

"What do you say to an autocar ride?" suggests Mr. Strand Lion. "What! Do you mean one of those steam 'buses?" "Of course I do," says Mr. Strand Lion; but Mr. Dilly Lion says: "Don't you know I hate steam 'buses? They have done away with all the nice fat horses. I can't eat steam 'buses, but I like fat horses." Mr. Strand Lion says: "I don't like fat horses so much as I like little fat boys," and off he goes galloping round the square nosing about just to see if he hasn't overlooked a little girl or boy that had forgotten to go home to bed. As he passes the two good lions they say: "Why don't you go to sleep, you bad lion," for they love boys and girls, not to eat, but just to love, you know. But Mr. Strand Lion doesn't mind a bit what they say, and only switches his tail in their faces.

By this time Mr. Piccadilly Lion has got down upon the pavement, and the two wicked lions trot off and sit down as sociable as you please, on the stone steps of St. Martin's Church, and they curl their tails until the tassels rest on their front paws, and they sit there looking at all the lot of lights and the stars. By-and-bye Mr. Strand Lion says:

"Let us give the folk a 'bus ride, Dilly," and Mr. Dilly Lion says: "I don't understand." And Mr. Strand Lion says, quite impudently: "You never do, Dilly. Western people are always

so thick-headed, just like northern people are always so good. It is only us east-by-south people who are cute and understand life. I mean, let us get a 'bus and take a lot of the statues out for a ride—Mrs. Queen Anne, and Mr. Temple-Bar Griffin, and Mr. King Charles, and the Piccadilly Fountain Cupid, and——"

But Mr. Dilly Lion stops him and asks: "Who is to draw the 'bus?" and Mr. Strand Lion, who is very sly, says "Why, of course whoever draws the 'bus has the best of it all, for, you see, he can go where he likes. You'll draw the 'bus, and I'll be conductor."

"I don't see much fun in drawing the 'bus," says Mr. Dilly Lion; but Mr. Strand Lion says: "You leave it to me, and I'll show you there will be heaps of lots of sport."

"Is the 'bus to be full inside and out?" asks Mr. Dilly, for he doesn't like hard work. "Of course it will," answers Mr. Strand Lion, and Mr. Dilly Lion shakes his head and says: "I'd rather be inside sitting down, I would." "No you would not—no you would not," says Mr. Strand Lion, "for you do not know what I am going to do." "What do you intend to do?" asks Mr. Dilly, for he is anxious to hear Mr. Strand Lion's plans.

But Mr. Strand Lion has no intention of telling all about what he has made up his mind to do. He just says: "Well, the Thames is very muddy across Westminster Bridge. It would make me laugh to see Mrs. Queen Anne and Mr. Temple Bar Griffin walking in the mud. Wouldn't you laugh, too, Dilly?" And of course Mr. Piccadilly Lion says he would.

So away the two naughty lions go to where a lot of 'buses were sound asleep; and after looking at them all, Mr. Strand Lion picks out that big red 'bus that goes to Kensington just after a quarter to ten every morning; and he harnesses Mr. Dilly Lion to the 'bus, and then he jumps on behind just like a conductor, and slaps the straps against the window on the on-side and whistles *Whee-uu!* And off starts Mr. Dilly Lion as fast as he can go, up the Strand and along Fleet Street, with Mr. Strand Lion leaning away out,



calling loudly "Bank! Bank! Bank!" as fast as he can, so as to make fun of all the sleeping policemen.

Presently Mr. Dilly Lion comes to where Mrs. Queen Anne stands on front of St. Paul's Cathedral; and he brings the 'bus to a halt, and Mr. Strand Lion steps off as nicely as you please, and says: "Hullo! Mrs. Queen Anne, how are you going on?" and Mrs. Queen Anne

up and says: "What? Horses for a queen! Not likely. The British Lion delights to take care of a Queen," he says; and Mrs. Queen Anne says: "My four maids must come with me, then," and Mr. Strand Lion says: "Of course, let the girls climb on top. They'll be quite comfortable up there, I'm sure."

In gets Mrs. Queen Anne, and after she is seated all snug in the far corner,



"COME AND SAVE ME!"

she draws her robes round her a little tighter and turns up her nose at Mr. Strand Lion, because he is so cheeky. But she rather likes Mr. Dilly Lion, for he is so good-natured and polite; and when he says: "Glorious evening, I'm sure. We have brought your carriage round to see if you would care to take a little fresh air, you know," Mrs. Queen Anne looks quite pleased.

But all at once she asks: "Where are the horses?" and Mr. Strand Lion looks

so that she can look out ahead, her four maids-of-honour that sit around the base of the pedestal they climb up on top laughing at a great rate and saying, "You go first, dear," and "O, I dare not. You go dear," and they keep on saying that so long that Mr. Strand Lion, who is conductor, he shouts "Now then, my dears, are you going on? We're in a hurry we are, we're no South-Eastern express you must remember."

So up they all get and Mr. Strand



Lion slaps the window with his strap and whistles ever so briskly *Whee-uu!* and off goes Mr. Dilly Lion, very proud to have Mrs. Queen Anne to draw. By-and-bye the 'bus comes to the Law Courts.

Now, on top of a great square shaft lives Mr. Temple-Bar Griffin making the most awful faces at Miss St. Clement's Danes Church, who is so shocked that she always keeps her clock hands before her face so as not to see the nasty grimaces Mr. Temple-Bar Griffin is always making just to frighten little girls and boys and Miss Clocks.

Mr. Strand Lion hops off the 'bus and goes up to Mr. Temple-Bar Griffin and whispers "Hullo, Griffin, limber up and come down. I want you."

Mr. Griffin crinkles his wings and looks over at Mr. Strand Lion and asks, "What for?"

"Why," says the naughty Lion, not caring a least little bit about an untruth, "we've got a pretty girl in the 'bus who is going to Trafalgar Square. She is Mr. Policeman's sweetheart."

Now, Mr. Griffin is very spiteful to Mr. Policeman, and so he says: "Wait a moment. I'll come down and give the girl such a fright." Down he comes, and Mr. Strand Lion opens the 'bus door and in jumps Mr. Temple Bar Griffin, with his mouth O! so wide open, and he crinkles his wings and curls his tail like a corkscrew, and hisses like a snake. Poor Mrs. Queen Anne, when she turns round, there she sees this awful Griffin looking at her. Up she jumps on top of the seat, and throws her hands over her eyes so that she shall not see the terrible Griffin, and she sets up such a shrill screaming, and calls out, "O! Mr. Strand Lion, O! Mr. Dilly Lion, come and save me! Come and save me!" but the two naughty lions do not care a bit, and only laugh.

Off they set with a rare rattle down to Charing Cross, Mrs. Queen Anne screaming so loudly as to almost waken some of the tired policemen. Indeed, Mr. Trafalgar Square Policeman does wake up in an awful fright, and is about to run off for protection from the magistrates, who are men paid to protect the

poor little policemen who get found out; but Mr. Strand Lion says to Mr. Policeman: "It is only a very pretty girl who is frightened of a mouse. I wish you would step inside and catch the mouse for her and see if you can't soothe her." At hearing this, Mr. Policeman dusts his helmet and pulls his collar down so that he may look smart, and curls his moustache, and in he steps all smiling to look for the mouse, and Mr. Strand Lion slams the door and slaps the strap against the window, and whistles *Whee-uu!* and laughs. When the 'bus was standing still, and when Mr. Dilly Lion and Mr. Strand Lion were not looking, Mr. King Charles had caught sight of the four maids-of-honour, and of course gets off his high horse and climbs upon top, and is telling the girls stories.

Of course the first thing poor Mr. Policeman sees when he steps inside is not a mouse nor pretty girl, but the awful, terrible Griffin; and he gets a big fright, for Mr. Griffin stings Mr. Policeman with his sharp spike tail. Poor Mr. Policeman's helmet tumbled off and he jumps for the door, but of course Mr. Strand Lion holds it tight, and Mr. Griffin goes after him and chases him round and round the 'bus, and by-and-bye the 'bus comes to where Piccadilly Cupid stands on one foot on top of the fountain. By this time Mr. Policeman has got behind Mrs. Queen Anne and is holding her between him and Mr. Griffin, and to be sure she, poor woman, is screaming. Mr. Strand Lion says to the Piccadilly Cupid: "Please come down and tell these people inside to be quiet;" and Cupid says: "I have had to shoot so many arrows to-night round this part that I haven't got one left; but maybe my bow will frighten them," and in he goes and gets the door shut on him, and, poor little fellow, Mr. Griffin goes for him too. Poor little Cupid, he flies up into a corner and perches there shivering.

The two very wicked Lions had now their 'bus full, and Mr. Strand Lion slaps the strap against the window and shouts: "Whee-uu! full inside and out."

"Where shall I go now?" asks Mr. Dilly Lion.



"Why, over Westminster Bridge, of course, as fast as ever you can."

Across the bridge they go, and then Mr. Strand Lion jumps off the platform and helps Mr. Dilly Lion to pull the 'bus at a terrible rate past St. Thomas's Hospital; and just where the river is at its very muddiest the two Lions rush the 'bus and let go the pole, and send it

in Trafalgar Square, laughing and winking and pretending that they had not done anything wrong.

And when the little girls and boys awoke next morning, there they saw all the fine statue people—Mrs. Queen Anne, Mr. King Charles, Mr. Temple-Bar Griffin, Mr. Piccadilly Cupid—and all plodding about in the deep mud, and



"'I'M ALWAYS GETTING DRAWN INTO A MESS'"

flying heels over head into the river. When Mr. King Charles sees what is up it is too late, of course; and he says, quite resigned, "I'm always getting drawn into a mess." Right over the Embankment the 'bus flies and plump into the mud, for the tide is out, and all the people and things spill out of the inside and fall off the top; and away cut the two wicked Lions for their places

crying and cold, and wanting to be taken out and put in their places again. Poor Mr. Griffin, he was in a very sad state, for his legs were so short, and his tail dragged in the cold mud and water. And the bad Lions, Mr. Strand Lion and Mr. Piccadilly Lion, were lying in their right places as comfortable as you please, and every now and again chuckling and winking at one another.



# *The Pen that Remembered*

WRITTEN BY H. D. LOWRY. ILLUSTRATED BY LEWIS BAUMER

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It was the end of a February day. The huge studio had been deserted by its owner because of the failing light; but he had left a splendid fire, and so Doris and the Visitor, invading the place for a moment, were tempted to stop on.

"Is there a story in your head?" asked Doris presently, when they were comfortably settled.

The Visitor looked around him as if in the hope of gathering inspiration from one or other of the ghostly canvases that stood against the walls, and on a couple of easels. "I don't think there is," he said at last. "Do you want one very badly?"

"Of course, I do," said Doris. "I am never so happy as when I am hearing a new story—if it is beautiful."

"There are lots of people like that, Doris," said the Visitor. "Well, did you ever hear the story of the magic pen? I don't think you can have, for I have only just thought of it."

Doris moved her eager body impatiently in the draperies on which she sat, as if to find a position of lasting comfort. "Tell me," she pleaded.

"Once upon a time," began the Visitor, "in a far country, but not so long ago, there lived a widow who had an only son."

Doris interrupted, for she was something critical in the matter of openings. "There are lots of stories like that," she murmured, with a restless stir of the draperies.

"You wait a little," said the Visitor. "The widow's husband had died when

the child was young, and so he was all she had left in life to care. She lived in a small white cottage. At the back of it there was a tiny orchard, where daffodils grew in spring among the grass, and hart's-tongue ferns upon the hedges. The front garden was smaller still. A pathway all paved with white pebbles led straight to the door, and on either side there was just enough grass to hold a bed in which a fuchsia-bush grew. The door was painted green and had a brass knocker; there were four windows with white blinds."

"Go on, please," said Doris, who recognised the cottage described, and began to be interested.

"Well, the son was his mother's only joy for a great many years, and he was all the joy she wanted. As the years went by she became old and wrinkled and weak, and her hair turned grey. But she never thought of this, because she was always watching her son, who grew taller and stronger and more handsome. Unhappily, he did not grow in wisdom quite so rapidly. He began to think that for a person like himself the village was altogether too small a place; and when he came home (often late at night) he used to look with contempt at the little house where he had been born.

"So his mother began to have sorrow mixed up with her joy and pride, for she did not know what to do to put an end to his discontent. She loved him as much as ever, and I think the son loved her after a fashion, though he sometimes spoke roughly to her. At any rate, he used to say he was sorry, and kiss her, and think she had forgotten his words. But one day the mother's heart was almost broken: her son had disappeared, leaving only a note to say that he had gone into a distant country to seek his fortune and see the world.



"Everything had gone out of the mother's life. The little cupboard of a house seemed to echo with emptiness as she moved about in it; and when she went out, even into the busiest places, it seemed to her that the great world

ever, and there were always flowers in the window to welcome him if he should come back. But there was never any news; and she grew older and older, until one day a sailor-man came from oversea. The mother heard his footsteps



"'IS THERE A STORY IN YOUR HEAD?'"

echoed in the same way, being also empty. It was all because he was away, and because she had nothing to do but pray for news of him."

"And didn't he come back?" asked Doris, out of the shadows.

"For a long time the mother lived alone. The house was as well-swept as

on the path, and thought it was her son. But the stranger used the brass knocker, and before she opened the door she knew it was only a messenger.

"'You have news of my son?' she cried.

"The sailor had not much news. He could not tell her much, for that would



have broken her heart. The son had fallen into foolishness: he was like the Prodigal. But the sailor told her of an address at which a letter would reach him, and that was enough to make her glad. She compelled the sailor to eat some food and to drink some of the mead she made from her honey. Then she thanked him again, and as soon as he had left the house she went into the orchard and found a common goose-quill, and cut it into a pen. For the sake of what comes after you should remember that it was just a common goose-quill.

"She went back into her house and lit the lamp, and all that evening she was writing him a letter."

"Did she print it?" asked Doris, who demanded of her correspondents that their calligraphy should be of the clearest.

"She had not to write much, Doris, and so her ordinary handwriting was of a sort you could read. And it really was not much of a letter, for the old lady was not clever. There were many things she might have told him that would have interested him, but she only put one into the letter, though it was a long one. She was like some silly little bird that can only sing one song of a few notes, and must sing it over again if it wants to go on making music. She remembered the helpless baby she had been so proud of, and wrote, 'I love you, dear; come back.' Then she thought of the tiny child he had been when he first walked, and to him she wrote, 'I love you, dear; come back.' She thought of all the boys he had ever been, and last of all of the boy who had said hard words and gone into a far country forgetting her. To him she wrote, 'I love you, dear; come back. My heart is breaking for you.' When the letter was finished she went to bed, and the next morning she posted it. Now, that day she was continually thinking of what she had written, and she could not be sure that the letter was what it should have been. 'He will be a little ashamed,' she said. 'He was always sorry for the things he did. Perhaps I wasn't loving enough.' So she sat down and wrote him the same letter again, saying, 'I love you, dear;

come back. I love you, dear; come back,' just as that little foolish bird sings its song of a few notes over and over again. Day after day she wrote a letter in the evening and posted it in the morning, only to write another before she went to bed for fear she had not spoken lovingly enough."

"Did he come back to her?" asked Doris.

"He was a prodigal, and when a man is that he finds it hard to go back, though perhaps he is sorry. The son got letter after letter, and each of them made him sorrier; but he did not go back. The mother went on writing, and after a long time there came a letter that made him say, 'I will go back.' 'I love you, dear; come back,' she had written. 'My heart is breaking for you.' He saw how weak and trembling the handwriting was, and he repented. He made up his mind to do some honest work and get the money that should pay for his journey back. But first he wrote his mother: 'I am very sorry, mother,' he said. 'In a week I hope to be able to start for home, and I will never leave the little white house again.'

"At last he came home. Often in the last few days he had thought of how he would open the gate and run to the door, to find his mother there with her arms open. But he stood at the gate for a long time, and when he walked up the pathway he did so slowly and with a heavy heart. The white blinds were down: he knew that his mother was dead.

"They told him afterwards that she had never known sorrow from the moment when she received his letter. She had been busy day after day in setting the house to rights and making ready to welcome him. There was one thing over which she was specially glad, for her eyesight had grown bad and her fingers stiff. 'I shall never need to write another letter,' she said. But she had grown fond of the goose-quill pen, and so she wiped it carefully and put it away in a drawer where she kept all her dearest treasures. Then, on the night before he came back, she went to bed, and while she was sleeping, died. Her death was





"HE WAS A PRODIGAL"

just like the rose's death you told me of, that dreams in the moonlight and does not know its petals are falling until they are all fallen and its scent goes out in the wind. She was as happy as any rose can be that night. The last thing that anyone heard her say was: 'I am the gladdest woman in the world. My boy will be here to-morrow, I am sure.'"

The Visitor paused, and Doris, the firelight on her hair, questioned him a trifle indignantly. "Is that the end?"

"Why," he answered, "as a matter of fact it is only the beginning."

"It sounded like an end," said Doris, still aggrieved. "You've killed the poor old mother."

"The story is all about the pen," said the Visitor, "and you remember that the mother had put it away in her drawer. The son found it there, and guessed all about its history; and when he had seen the other treasures he knew how much

his mother had loved him. He made up his mind to keep his promise and live on in the little house, and for some time he did nothing but think of the days when he had deserted her, and repent bitterly. He was repenting all the rest of his life, but soon he saw that he must find some business. He thought about it a great deal, and made up his mind that gardening is the only really important business in the world so long as you don't trouble your head about vegetables. So he became a gardener, and, because he was always thinking as he moved about among the flowers—because also he had sinned deeply, and bitterly repented—he grew wiser than most men, and after a time was much consulted by people who were in trouble. He advised them so well that he grew quite famous, and after a time the people in those parts always said to a friend who was in difficulties: 'Go and see the Gardener at the



little white house. He will tell you what to do.'

"Now one day there came to him a very rich gentleman. He was in great sorrow. His only daughter, Marjory, had fallen in love with a poor poet and got married to him. The poet was a good man, but the father only knew that he was poor; and so he was angry with his daughter, and would not forgive her until she had left her husband. This, of course, she could not do. The father did not like the idea of consulting a mere gardener, but he had done all he could, without avail; and so he came to the little white house.

"They tell me you are very wise,' he said. 'Can you tell me what I must do in order to bring back a thankless child to a sense of what is right?'

"I should be able to do that,' said the Gardener, very sadly. 'A poor old woman did as much for me. Will you tell me how matters are?'

"The father was only half-way through his story when the Gardener stopped him. 'Excuse me,' he said, feeling in his pocket for his keys. He ran upstairs, and soon came back carrying the goose-quill pen.

"When you write letters to your daughter——' he began.

"But the father interrupted, almost angrily: 'How do you know that I write her letters?' he cried. 'I have cast her off.'

"You love her,' said the Gardener. 'You write her many letters, some of which you burn. I will lend you this pen, the most precious thing I have. When you write letters to her, use this pen.'

"But it is worn out,' cried the father. 'I don't believe I could write my name with it.'

"Try,' said the Gardener. He found paper and ink, and the father tried. He had been correct in what he said; he could not write his name, for when he tried to do that the pen wrote *Darling Daughter*; and when he crossed that out angrily and tried again, it wrote *Dear little Marjory*.

"Take it away with you,' said the Gardener. 'I promise you that happiness shall be yours again.'

"The father grumbled a good deal, but he took the pen and went back to his home. He felt that he was foolish to believe in what the Gardener said, and walked on the dark side of the road lest people should recognise him and guess that he believed a mere goose-quill pen—and an old one at that—was going to do away with his trouble. Yet as soon as he had got home he shut his study door and began to write a letter to Marjory."

"And what happened?" asked Doris, leaning her head against the Visitor's knee.

"Nobody ever quite knew," said he. "It is certain that the father was still angry with the Poet, though he loved his daughter. I believe he sat down intending to tell her once more that if she would leave her husband and come back, he would be very glad to receive her. He did not know that the pen had only written loving letters ever since the old mother made it a pen, and that it had written these for so long a time that it could write no others. Perhaps he thought, when he put it into its envelope, that it was just like the others he had written. You may depend that he was wrong, for the pen could not have written them. Indeed, it was almost like a living creature, so you may say it would not write them.

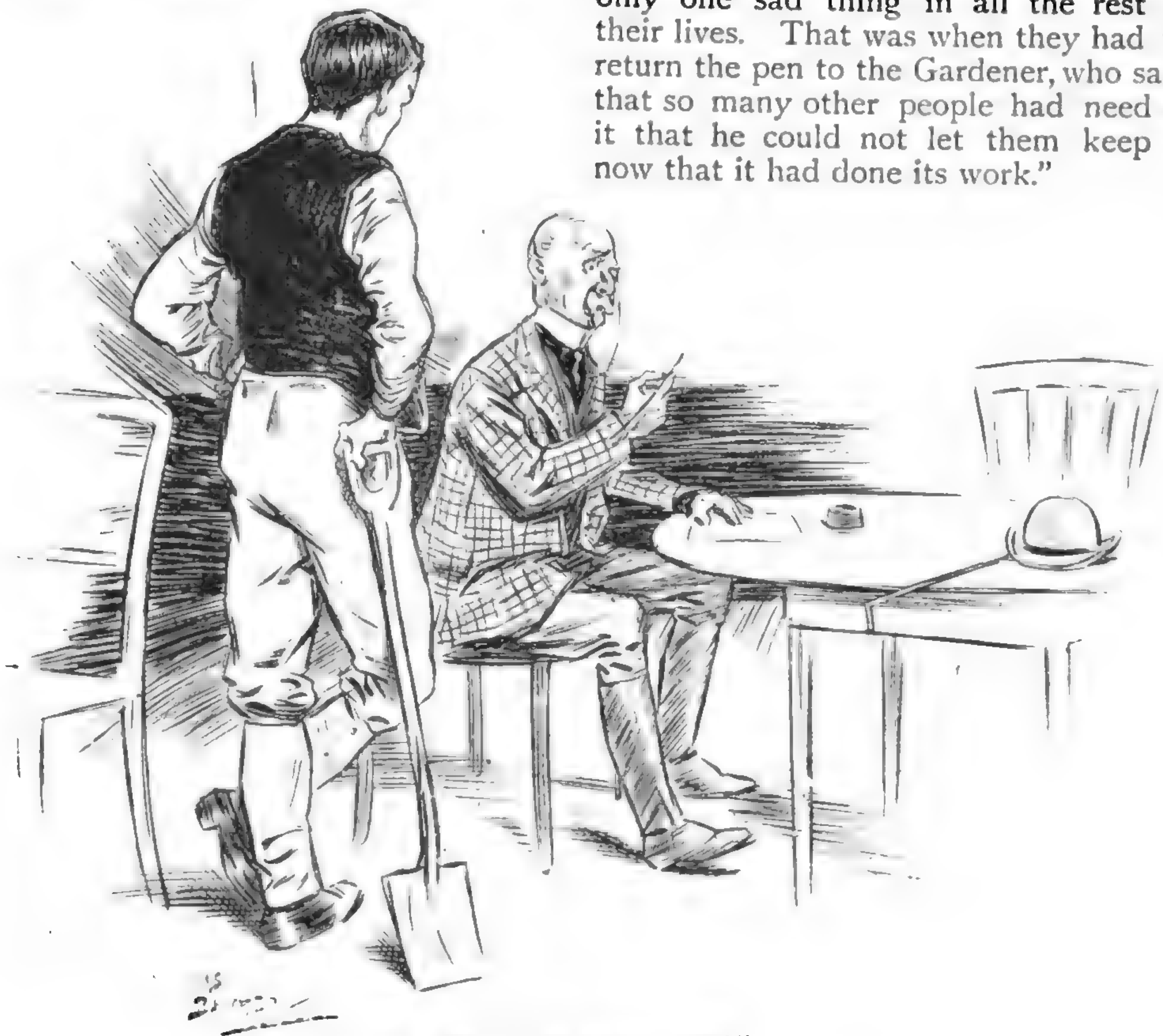
"The father went on writing letters. It was a worn, old pen, but somehow it fitted comfortably into the hand, and he was never so happy as when he was using it. But he soon found that he must not use it for business letters: it would have been stupid to begin 'My darling child' when he was writing an order to a coal merchant. Sometimes he got angry half-way through one of the lovely letters the pen made him write, and he did his best to make it different. It was no good; he could not stop the pen except by tearing up the letter. Can you guess what happened? The pen began to make a difference in him, as well as in the letters he wrote with it. So one day he took a clean sheet of paper, and some fresh ink, and spoke to the pen. 'You are much cleverer than I,' he said, 'but you can-



not be half so fond of Marjory. Write what you think best.' So the pen wrote."

"What?" asked Doris.

the Poet collected her wraps. And Marjory and the Poet lived there ever afterwards, and they and the father had only one sad thing in all the rest of their lives. That was when they had to return the pen to the Gardener, who said that so many other people had need of it that he could not let them keep it now that it had done its work."



"BUT IT IS WORN OUT"

"I don't think that matters. All that I know is that three days later he told his servants he expected friends, and bade them get the best room ready, and put roses everywhere. At six he had the carriage ordered round and drove to the station. At seven the carriage drove up to the door again, and when the servants opened it they saw the father helping Marjory out, while

The Visitor paused. The fire was low, and it was clearly close upon dinner-time. Doris did not speak until they had locked the studio door and were climbing the steep lane towards her home. Then, "Do you think the old mother knew?" she asked.

"Of course she did," answered the Visitor, with a confidence he sometimes lacked. "Why, it was all her doing."



# From Beyond the Window

WRITTEN BY NELLIE K. BLISSETT. ILLUSTRATED BY W. R. COLLINS



HE last chord of Grieg's "Einsamer Wanderer" shivered away into silence, and Bellemontagne rose from the piano with a noiseless, caressing flick of the fingers across the shining keys. He took up his glass from the table and emptied it, nodding lightly to me across the rim; and the clock on the mantelpiece tolled out eleven solemn strokes.

"Good luck, Bazarac," said my companion, taking up his candle, "and good-night. I leave you to watch the Old Year out and the New Year in. For me—the idea is charming, but not attractive. *Bon soir!*"

He waved his cigarette gracefully in the air and sauntered slowly towards the door. As he went he looked back. "Last New Year's Eve," he remarked thoughtfully, "I woke up in the middle of the night. I heard a sound—I listened. A piano was playing—my piano—very softly. I imagined myself dreaming, and went to sleep again."

He paused to snuff the candle delicately with the tips of his fingers.

"Well?" I queried.

"Well—I slept. Next morning there was a string broken in my grand."

"But what broke it?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I know nothing. I have told you what I heard. Ghosts? O, possibly. For me—I do not believe in them. There is, I suppose, a story—there are always stories—and fools."

I heard his footsteps ascending the stairs to the whistled accompaniment of—I blush to record it of a promising musician, but the fact remains, and the fact was—"Her Golden Hair was Hanging down her Back." I went to the door and called after him.

"Bellemontagne!"

"Yes?"

"I know what broke that string."

"Ah! you always had a vivid imagination."

"You had been hearing Rosenthal and trying Power—with a capital P."

A boot arrived suddenly from the upper regions, and an unruffled voice answered sweetly:

"Then I will try it now—with a capital B! May you have a happy night with the ghost."

I laughed, and returned to my arm-chair and the contemplation of the smoke from one of Bellemontagne's cigars. I heard him moving about in the room overhead, still whistling. Then all sound ceased save the sobbing of the wind in the chimney and the occasional noise of footsteps in the street.

It was a small house in a lonely little French village to which Bellemontagne had retired for purposes of study. His idea of study, as far as I could define it, consisted in earnestly doing nothing for as many hours out of the twenty-four as possible, with arduous intervals of conversation and refreshment.

The room in which I sat had two windows, one looking into the street—the other upon a strip of garden, ice-bound, silent, haunted by the ghosts of frozen flowers. In the middle of it stood a big mulberry tree, with a broken rustic seat falling in rotten strips about its roots. I went to this window now, and drew up the blind. Pale, frosty moonlight was streaming across the garden, filtered through the twigs of the mulberry tree. As I looked, I remembered that a name was carved upon what had once been the back of the seat, now green and slimy with age. I had forgotten what name it was, and, at the moment, a sudden curiosity about it seized me. I lifted the

latch and stepped out into the frozen garden, closing the long window behind me.

The snow felt hard and crisp beneath my feet; the cold air was like the touch of an icy hand upon my face. I walked across the lawn, leaving a track of footsteps behind me. The sky above was of a pale, clear blue, and it was very light—though not light enough to see the object of my search. I lit a match and found the name—Gérard—cut deeply into the wood on exactly the place where I had expected to see it.

I blew out the little flickering jet of flame and flung the match into the snow. The red wood hissed faintly, and then grew black; and at that moment the bells for midnight mass began to rock and clatter in the grey stone chapel beyond the dead river.

I stood listening, looking back towards the lighted window of the room I had left; and as I looked I saw a dark figure rise from the shrubbery by the gate and slip cautiously across the snow towards the window on which my eyes had been fixed.

Of course, I very naturally concluded that a burglarious attack was impending. I waited until the figure had nearly reached the window, and then called out. To my astonishment the man, whoever he was, paid not the slightest attention to my voice, but crept on cautiously to-

wards the house as though he had not heard me.

I hesitated for a moment, and then followed him. As I neared the window I was amazed to hear the sound of a piano, played very softly, and my first



"I LIT A MATCH AND FOUND THE NAME"

thought was that Bellemontagne, intending a practical joke and hearing me go out into the garden, had stolen downstairs and begun to play. I was mistaken, however.

The man was leaning against the window-frame peering into the room. I came behind him and looked over his shoulder. His back was towards me, and I only caught the dark outline of



his side face and a mass of tangled hair which showed beneath his hat. It was an old hat, and his clothes were shabby—I noticed a ragged hole in his sleeve. But I did not spend much time in examination of this midnight prowler, for my attention was attracted to the

man sat in my easy-chair with a book in his hand, and at the piano, which stood between him and the window, a woman in a white dress was playing softly to herself. The lamplight fell on her fair hair and on the delicate mauve ribbons which looped up the soft folds of her dress. Her head was bent over a music-book, which she held on her knee with one hand, whilst with the other she fingered pianissimo chords among the keys.

For a moment nothing disturbed the quiet scene. The man before me pushed one hand beneath the cover of his coat, and I noticed that his arm trembled against the warm radiance of the interior. Then the occupant of my chair raised his eyes suddenly from his book. It was evident that he saw the figure at the window. His face whitened, and an expression of the most agonised horror grew in his dilated eyes. It seemed to me that a cry rose to his lips, but only to be checked. He glanced at the woman at the piano, and was silent. She appeared perfectly



"PEERING INTO THE ROOM"

room. For an instant I thought I must be dreaming, or else that I had strayed into some other garden—though I knew that this was impossible, for behind me stood the mulberry tree, and above me the familiar irregular lines of roof and chimney cut across the faded sapphire of the sky.

Yet something very strange had certainly happened. When I left the room it was empty: and now the figure of a

unconscious of anything unusual, and hummed an air to herself. I could hear it through the insecurely fastened window.

All at once she ran up a scale and stopped on a high note; and suddenly a loud report rang in my ears, and a clatter as of broken glass, confused strangely with something like a shriek—or was it the rising wind? For an instant I leant back against the wall, deafened and be-

wildered ; and when I recovered myself the room was empty—my book lay where I had left it, on the arm of the chair—the rays of the reading-lamp fell peacefully on the square red pattern of the table-cover—the piano was closed, and the music-stool vacant.

I opened the window and went hastily into the room. There was a sound of hurried footsteps overhead, and in a minute or two Bellemontagne appeared at the door in dressing-gown and slippers, and blinking sleepily at me across the brightness of a lighted candle.

"What has happened?"

"Did you hear anything?"

"Hear anything? Mon Dieu! It was loud enough to wake the dead."

"What was loud enough?"

"How should I know? It sounded like a pistol-shot. You have not been practising suicide?"

"No. I went out into the garden, and when I came back a man was standing at the window, and two people were in the room—a man in that chair, and a woman at the piano."

"A woman?"

"A woman in a white dress with mauve ribbons. She was playing, and then there was a great noise, and I found myself leaning against the wall. The room was empty."

Bellemontagne set down his candlestick on the table, and gazed at me with puzzled eyes.

"It is very strange. And I heard the piano, too," he added to himself.

"So did I. And, Bellemontagne—there is a name carved on that seat out there, a name I seem to have heard before in connection with some incident I can't recall."

"What name is it?"

"Gérard."

The pianist's face changed a little.

"Gérard! Good heavens! It is certainly very strange."

"Who was Gérard, then?"

"He was an actor who ran away with his manager's wife. And the manager followed them and shot her."

Then I, too, said "Good heavens!" and we were silent.

The clock ticked placidly on the mantelpiece; the pleasant firelight danced and flickered gaily on the hearth, as though all unconscious of the ghostly tragedy which had been played before it a few minutes earlier. Suddenly Bellemontagne went across to the piano and opened it.

"It was the first C above the line before," he said. "I wonder if it is broken again?"

He touched the note—there was no answer. Subsequent examination showed that the string had snapped as clearly as though cut with a knife.

All at once Bellemontagne uttered an exclamation: "What is this?"

He held it up. . . It was a knot of mauve ribbon!





# *The Blue Chrysanthemum*

WRITTEN BY NELLIE K. BLISSETT. ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN H. BACON



It happened when I was staying at the Casa Marciera in Castelmara. I am not going to give any geographical information with regard to Castelmara, for it is the loveliest place in the world, and I don't want it spoilt. There are two distinct colonies in it—the town proper, which lies right on the sea-shore, and is picturesque but odoriferous, and the “Mountains,” as they

call the little settlement of white houses high up on the side of the hills, where the weaker residents, who cannot stand the cholera bacilli on the lower slopes, congregate together in anything but amity.

Castelmara, being a border town, has two Consuls, who spend the unofficial portion of their time dining with each other, and reviling the abominable heat and dulness of their town, in the face of the loveliest scenery that ever delighted mortal eye. Marciera, by building himself a little white shanty in this wilderness, increased my respect for him considerably. When he asked me to spend the summer there, I felt that he was really, in his way, a very estimable person indeed.

Some days after my arrival we sat smoking on a little square of rock overlooking the road which wound right past the front of the house. To the rear were the gardens, sloping up the hill, and in front rocks, a few precipices, a distant peep of Castelmara the Lower, and beyond that the sea. The rock whereon we had pitched our cane

seats and unfurled our big green umbrella formed a kind of natural terrace to the house, and had steps cut in it which made a novel, if rather rough, approach.

We were both reading contentedly when Marciera suddenly glanced up.

“What on earth is this,” he murmured, “if it isn't the ghost of Ruy Diaz de Bivar?”

Following the direction of Marciera's lifted finger, I observed approaching a sufficiently odd object to excuse his exclamation. This was an individual garbed in picturesque but somewhat peculiar attire. There was nothing particular about his nether adornment, but his upper man was protected by a loose white shirt, and a black cloak lined with grey drooped gracefully from one shoulder. He had a scarlet belt, and wore a huge sombrero tilted artistically on the back of his head. His features, at the distance, were not discernible, but the scheme of colour which characterised his costume led one to await them hopefully.

Marciera grunted.

“Masquerading tourist!” he remarked, with extreme disgust; then he relapsed into silence and his book, and, being interested in mine, I followed his example.

Presently I was disturbed by a soft whistling; the man in the sombrero was just beneath us. I took a glance at him over the edge of the rock and sat down again with a little gasp.

“Who is it?” inquired Marciera. “Ruy Diaz?”

“I don't know,” I said, “but he has the most beautiful face I ever saw in my life. Look!”

Marciera obeyed, and nodded assent to my statement. Then he settled down again to read.

The Sombrero pursued his way slowly up the road. Presently a sound



roused Marciera most effectually. Through the still air came the fragment of a song, half-hummed, weird and strange. Then the singer flung back his head, and there came down the white road the notes of a tenor voice which for purity, compass, and richness, I have never heard equalled. Marciera sprang to his feet and the book fell to the ground.

"Where have I heard that voice?" he asked quickly. Then a look of intelligence flashed over his face.

"Opera! Paris!" he said, in rapid explanation, and bolted for the steps. And I, following him more slowly, saw the greatest of living violinists scuttering down the road after the stranger like a scared rabbit. The Sombrero turned and faced his pursuer, who came up hot and breathless.

"Who are you, Señor?" panted Marciera, bluntly.

A smile broke over the stranger's beautiful features, and he held out his hand.

"I am Tlexula," he said, very simply, "and you are Pablo de Marciera."

I looked at him with increased interest. I had heard over and over again of Tlexula, the great tenor, but curiously enough I had never been able to hear him sing. On my last visit to Paris I found that everybody had gone mad over him; and when I inquired one night at the Atelier Espagnol, in somewhat doubting terms, whether he were really such a marvel, I roused a perfect storm of enthusiasm from Madame Garcia. Well, I could understand it now: a man with such a voice, and such a face, might well be popular.

"And what in Heaven's name are you doing here?" said the Spanish violinist.

Tlexula laughed.

"Well, I am admiring the scenery, and passing through Castelmara." "You'll not pass any further at present, then," returned Marciera.

"There is my house, and here am I, and, when he gets here, here is Niels Bazarac, and we want to hear Tlexula sing. Bazarac has hunted you vainly through Europe, I believe, and I've only heard you once. Come along! All my

worldly possessions are yours, and we've got ducks for dinner."

Tlexula hesitated.

"But it will inconvenience you?"

"My dear fellow, I wish there were forty of you instead of one."

"I shall certainly not be able to sing after the duck," said the tenor, smiling.

"You can dine to-night and sing to-morrow."

"This is too good of you, really," said Tlexula; "but personally I shall be only too delighted. I want," he added gracefully, with a glance at me, "to hear some more of your Spanish Fantasias. There is nothing like them, is there, M. Bazarac?"

"Nothing," I said, "and there will be nothing like Marciera's wrath if you don't stay. Be wise and consent to eat those ducks."

We walked back to the house, and sat down on the rock. Tlexula dropped his knapsack at his feet, and lay back in his chair with a sigh of relief.

"It is deliciously cool here," he admitted. "I have had rather too much sun to-day."

"One can never have too much sun," said Marciera.

Tlexula disagreed with him, and they plunged into laughing argument. After a time Marciera went up to the house to give directions for the reception of his guest, and I was left alone with the singer.

"What a beautiful place this is!" he said, looking across to Castelmara and the sea. "And how different it was three thousand years ago!"

"There were no houses then?"

He shook his head.

"On the contrary, the whole of the slope was covered by an immense city. You see that three-cornered rock over there? That is the site of the King's palace. There was a temple, too, with a tower of gold and pillars of painted ivory. I have never," he added reflectively, "seen anything so beautiful since."

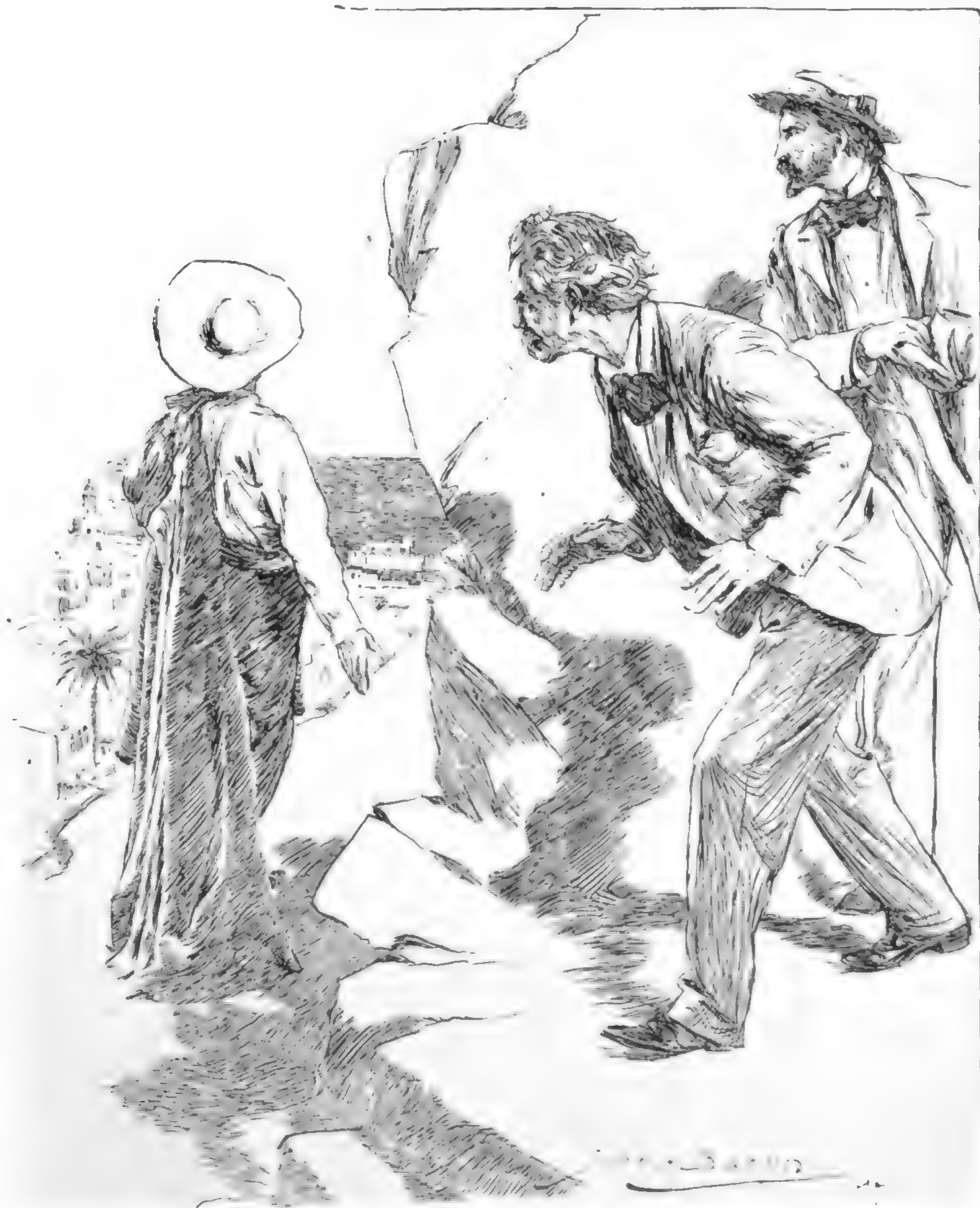
I started a little.

"Since?"

He ignored my remark.

"It was burnt, and all its inhabitants massacred by a neighbouring tribe. The





"HE BOLTED FOR THE STEPS"

King escaped into the mountains and was never heard of again."

"You take an interest in curious historical books, I expect?" I suggested, for how else could I account for his marvellously intimate description of this unknown city which had existed three thousand years ago?

"I never read books," said Tlexula, carelessly; "they are only inaccurate.

Your local guide-book, now, doesn't tell you about this city?"

"No."

"Of course not. It tells you instead how many tons of raisins Castelmara exports per annum, and that you don't want to know. But the city is really interesting: here is a fragment of one of the pillars."

He bent down and brushed a little



piece of rock aside. Beneath it lay something which looked like a small fragment of bone. Tlexula rubbed it with the palm of his hand, and I perceived that it was tinged with tarnished scarlet and gold.

"Fossilised, you see," he said. "There are lots of other bits about, I dare say; probably buried pottery, too. Their pottery was very beautiful. It would be worth while to excavate that mound over there."

"Why?"

"It was the Royal burying-place. There is a lot of armour there, or ought to be, if the vaults are air-tight."

I began to feel mystified. This man who never read books seemed to possess very strange information.

"You have not travelled a great deal?"

"Everywhere. I have hardly ever done anything else."

"But your singing—that keeps you to great cities, surely?"

"My singing," he answered, with a smile, "is a comparatively recent employment."

I sat silent, thinking, and the more I thought the more puzzled I became. Tlexula, I knew, had studied music since he was a child. He had appeared as a prodigy pianist at the early age of seven; at ten his first symphony had been performed in Paris. From ten to twenty-one he had worked hard at the piano and composition; then, indeed, he had gone on tour through Europe as a pianist for a few years. And on his return to Paris he had suddenly startled the world by appearing one night at the opera in the part of Lohengrin, to fill the place of an indisposed first tenor. After that there was no question as to his future career; the operatic stage claimed him as one of the greatest artists who had ever appeared on it, and gifted with dramatic capabilities as magnificent as his voice.

And yet he said he had travelled all his life—a thing I knew to be impossible.

"I should have called you a confirmed stay-at-home," I said.

He laughed. "Well, I cannot do much work here, can I? Personally, I

would rather be in Paris; there are circumstances connected with this place which make it singularly painful to me."

"But you will go back to Paris?"

"O, yes. The doctors ordered me away. They told me my brain would go if I did much more opera for the present, so here I am."

I reflected that he might be a little mad, and hence his singular ignorance of the facts of his own life and his equally abnormal knowledge of forgotten history.

\* \* \* \*

That evening Tlexula came down to dinner in irreproachable evening dress. I wondered a good deal where he had carried it, but he did not volunteer any information as to the quantity of his baggage. He certainly looked superb, and I noticed that he had even provided himself with a button-hole.

"What a funny flower!" said Marciera, also noticing his guest's adornment. "It's like a chrysanthemum, only blue. Where did you find it?"

"It is a local flower," answered Tlexula, smiling at me across the table, "and bloomed three thousand years ago, when that city I told M. Bazarac about stood in the place of Castelmara." "

"Tell me about the city," commanded Marciera, who was carving the ducks. And the rest of our dinner was enlivened with marvellously realistic descriptions of the exterminated race of Vlascans, their manners, their laws, their religion, their architecture, art, science, and music, until I said, in joke:

"Really, Señor Tlexula, I believe you are a Vlascan native's soul in a Spanish tenor's body."

He looked up at me suddenly.

"Do you think that is impossible?" he asked with a curious smile.

Marciera dropped back in his chair with a groan.

"O, don't you two commence to discuss the transmigration of souls," he said imploringly; "it is really too hot—and dry."

Tlexula made a little quick movement of annoyance.

"If one's soul isn't interesting, what is?" he said. "As to the transmigration



of souls, don't you think it is a very reasonable idea? Perhaps," he added, laughing at Marciera's mournful face, "you are at this moment entertaining a Vlascan native, as M. Bazarac says, and I am talking to a some-time Visigoth, and a Senator of ancient Rome."

"I believe I was a gipsy," I said; "and I always tell Marciera, when I want to annoy him, that he is Paganini Redivivus."

"Paganini Redivivus performs at one of the London music-halls, doesn't he?" said Tlexula. "No, I don't think that Señor Marciera has anything to do with him. But he may be a Visigoth."

"And you are a Vlascan?" asked Marciera, as we left the table.

A strange expression shot across the tenor's face.

"Yes," he said quietly, "perhaps I am." And I felt that this time he was not joking.

\* \* \* \*

The days went by, and Tlexula remained a fixture at the Casa Marciera. He seemed very pleased to stay, and Marciera would not hear of his departure. Indeed, the violinist had taken such a fancy to him as I never knew him show towards anyone else.

Certainly Tlexula was a most fascinating companion. There was nothing he could not talk, and talk well, about, and nothing he did not know. In fact, his conversation was so interesting that Marciera and myself would have inclined towards silence, with an occasional question, had he allowed us to do so; but he never did. It would have been impossible to find anyone at once so brilliant and so charmingly unconscious of his own powers.

All the time, however, I had an impression, curious and haunting, that there was something mysterious about the delightful tenor—what, I could not have explained. It was not that I did not like him—I have rarely admired anyone so much—and it was certainly not that I suspected him of any evil. But now and then, in moments of silence, I saw that strange expression on his face which I had noticed at the termination of our talk on the transmigration of souls.

Once or twice, too, I had a curious feeling, when alone with him, that there was a third person present—a feeling which I did not at all like, though I set it down to mere imagination. Having these peculiar sensations, I was hardly surprised when one evening Marciera came into my room, when I was alone, with a very disturbed air.

"Come here, Bazarac," he said, excitedly.

I followed him to the window, which was at the back of the house, and looked out upon the garden. Not twenty paces away two figures were walking on the wide path, having the moonlight full on them, and with their backs towards us. One was a woman dressed in blue of a very vivid shade; the other was unquestionably our guest.

"Who is she?" I inquired.

"Hang it all!" exclaimed Marciera, indignantly, "do you think I know? If it isn't cool cheek, though, I don't know what is."

"But what——"

"I don't object to his amusing himself," pursued Marciera, with much suppressed wrath, "but what—what does this mean? Where has he found that woman?"

An odd impulse prompted me to say something which I had never intended to say.

"Do you think she is a woman, Marciera?"

He stared at me.

"Do you suppose," he inquired, sarcastically, "that any right-minded man would walk about in blue petticoats? Or"—and he checked himself—"you don't believe in ghosts?"

"I've never seen one," I replied cautiously.

"No more have I," said Marciera, "and I never shall, either—Tlex-u-la!"

The two figures turned at Marciera's call and came towards us. And then a marvellous thing occurred. The path was wide, and the moonlight was shining brightly on it; there was not a tree nor a rock near, behind which anyone could have dodged. Further than this, I had my eyes firmly fixed upon the couple the whole time; but when





"LOOK! HE HAS NO SHADOW!"



Tlexula reached us, he reached us—alone!

I heard Marciera draw a quick breath; Tlexula looked up at us very calmly.

"Did you call?"

Marciera hesitated.

"Yes. I thought—I thought—I wanted to go down to Castelmara, if you cared to go. Were—was anyone with you just now? Perhaps it was the moonlight I saw?"

"Perhaps," said Tlexula; and he added, with a little ring of regret in his voice, "I am alone."

"Will you come with me, then?"

"Of course. I will come round to the front for you?"

He turned to go round the house, and Marciera suddenly gripped my arm.

"Look!" he whispered. "Look! *he has no shadow!*"

It was true enough. Tlexula was walking right between the moon and the wall of the house, but not the faintest suggestion of a shadow fell from his figure on the white plaster. Marciera looked at me.

"What does it mean?"

"I don't know;" and I added, rather unkindly, "*you* don't believe in ghosts!"

He went away, and I heard him join Tlexula at the front door. Their footsteps died away on the white road, and I went downstairs into the verandah and prepared to smoke a cigarette in the cool of the night.

I had just made myself comfortable and settled down to enjoy the prospect of the moonlight on the sea and the twinkling of the lamps in the town, when I again felt that curious sensation of not being alone. I sat for some moments trying to overcome it, but in vain. I was just on the point of rising from my chair when the moonlight in front of me darkened a little, and I saw the woman in the blue dress standing a few paces away. Her long, fair hair hung over her shoulders, and her eyes were fixed on me; they seemed alight with a wonderful moving fire which disconcerted me somewhat. Yet this apparition did not surprise me, neither did I feel any sensation of fear.

She walked into the verandah and sat down in a vacant chair.

"It's a fine night," I remarked.

I felt that it was a hideously prosy remark to make to a ghost, but, at least, it was a harmless opening to a conversation.

"Yes," she said, quietly. "You are not afraid of me?"

"Tlexula is not," I replied, attempting to discover her business with the tenor.

She smiled.

"No. You saw me before, then?"

"Both Marciera and I saw you. I suppose Tlexula saw you, too."

Her face grew very sad.

"No," she said, "Tlexula can't see me, nor hear me, nor speak to me. That is our punishment."

I began to feel sorry for this gentle and communicative spirit.

"He has forgotten you?" I asked, adding, with some hesitation—for it seemed a ridiculous thing to say to anyone so palpably present—"You are dead?"

"You would call me so. I died about three thousand years ago."

A light flashed across me.

"You are a Vlascan?"

"Yes."

"And Tlexula," I said suddenly, "is the King?"

She bent her head. "And my husband."

I got up and took off my hat—it was a sombrero, and lent itself to a sweeping salutation.

"You are the Queen of Vlasca!"

"No," she said, mournfully; "it was intended that I should become the High Priestess, therefore the priests would not recognise the marriage. They roused the next tribe against us, and the place was taken and everyone massacred. We fled to the mountains and they pursued us, and then——" she shuddered and stopped.

"You both committed suicide?" I suggested.

"He killed me," she murmured brokenly, "and—and then himself. It was best: they would have done such horrible things."

"And your punishment?"



She stood up suddenly and passionately, and stretched out her arms in the moonlight.

"He has to go on, on, on, living, and I am dead," she said. "He cannot see me nor speak to me, and I—I cannot make him hear me. And it cannot end until he gives back the two lives that he took."

"But that is impossible."

"Yes, I think it is—three thousand years," she repeated bitterly, "three thousand years! Will it never end?"

I considered for a moment.

"What about that little blue flower he wears so often?"

Her face brightened.

"That is the only thing I can give him. He finds that, and he knows it comes from me. It is the sacred Blue Chrysanthemum of Vlasca."

I cannot say what happened next, for the simple reason that I do not know. But I do know that Castelmara, and the sea, and the sky, got jumbled all together under my eyes, and that the verandah ran round and exploded. When I next remembered anything, I was lying in bed in my own darkened room, and Marciera was standing over me with a very grave face.

"What has happened?" I inquired feebly. "Where am I?"

"Where you'll stop. As for what has happened, you ought to know best. I found you insensible in the verandah. It may have been the sun, or——" Marciera's tone implied pretty distinctly that it might not have been the sun.

"Where's Tlexula?"

"Smoking. He wanted to nurse you, but you talked such nonsense about him for three days that I wouldn't let him."

"Three days!" I gasped.

"You have been delirious for a week," said Marciera, grimly.

"And — and the Blue Chrysanthemum?"

"Hang the Blue Chrysanthemum! Drink this." I drank it, and found it nasty enough to banish everything else from my mind; and by the time I had recovered from it I was asleep.

\* \* \* \*

When I was well enough to think about my interview with the Blue

Chrysanthemum, as I called her, I must own that I was inclined to consider it as the vision of an over-excited brain, and the commencement of my illness. Certainly, the fact remained that Marciera had seen her, too, and that he was in full possession of all his faculties at the time. But the story which she had told me might be the outcome of my imagination, worked upon by the apparition in the garden, and Tlexula's description of the sack of Vlasca. The more I thought of the matter, the more I was inclined to accept this as the only possible explanation of the matter.

But I did not accept it in this light long, before I experienced another extraordinary adventure. One morning I came down very early, a thing contrary to my usual habits. Tlexula was generally up and singing scales at six, but the scale practice was too beautiful a performance to annoy anyone. Marciera, used to a life of constant late hours and strong nervous excitement, rarely appeared until eleven. On this particular day I said good-morning to Tlexula, passed through the music-room, and sat down in the verandah. It was a singularly clear, bright morning. All at once I was surprised to see a thin mist rising from the sea. This mist gradually covered Castelmara, and came rapidly up the slope, until I could not see the road ten paces away. Then it cleared off as rapidly as it had appeared, leaving a sight behind it which made me doubt the evidence of my own eyes.

The verandah and the house seemed to have vanished, and I found myself sitting on a flight of white stone steps. A little space away rose a great white building with a tower of gold, and all around, from the Casa Marciera Gardens to the sea, stretched houses, palaces, temples, domes, towers, spires, all built of the same white stone and decorated freely with gold. Everything seemed deserted: no one moved in the silent streets, and for some moments I sat watching the great blue and gold banner flap idly over the temple tower. Then people came suddenly from all directions: some in armour, some as though





"STRETCHED OUT HER ARMS IN THE MOONLIGHT"



hurriedly and but half-dressed, some wringing their hands and others clutching weapons—soldiers and priests, and women with children clinging to their skirts—but all silent. Not a sound could be heard but the far-off whisper of the sea; and it was a wonderfully impressive and awful thing to mark the grief and consternation of that great assembly and yet hear no sound of crying, no rattle of arms.

The cause of their distress soon appeared. Into the streets burst men in armour of another fashion—men with heavy maces in their hands and scarlet plumes in their open helmets. They struck down the priests and the soldiers, and even the women and children, and flung lighted torches into the doors. Then a great smoke and flame began to rise from the city, until it was one blaze of leaping fire from the heights to the shore, and then city and flames vanished, and I sat once more in the verandah, and heard Tlexula in the room behind me practising a trill on his upper C.

I re-entered the room, and he stopped.

"Did you see anything just now?" I asked.

He appeared surprised at the question.

"Nothing at all."

"You can see Castelmara from where you are sitting. Are you *sure* you saw nothing?"

"Positively sure. Why?"

"I thought—something was on fire down the slope."

He jumped up from the piano.

"We'll go and look round. Mind you don't come without a hat."

I followed him into the road. There was no fire to be seen, and everything was quite calm.

"There is nothing," said Tlexula. "What a glorious morning! Let us walk down the road, Bazarac. We may meet the post."

We proceeded down the road until we reached a very steep descent, at the end of which the path swung round in an abrupt curve. It was a dangerous place, for on the one side was the solid rock in which the road was cut, and on the other the cliff shot straight down into the dried channel of a stream eighty

feet below. Tlexula paused to light a cigarette, and I sat down on a stone in the shadow of the rock.

"What noise is that?" asked Tlexula, suddenly.

I listened, and hearing a sound of distant wheels, laughed.

"That's the French Consul's carriage."

Tlexula looked disturbed.

"A carriage, and on this road—is the French Consul mad?"

"No, he's married, and his wife likes a drive. She's taking an early one this morning."

"It's not safe," said Tlexula.

"O, yes, if you drive slowly."

"But," returned the tenor shortly, "they are *not* driving slowly."

It was true enough. The wheels were evidently revolving at a furious rate—it was possible that the horses had taken fright at something and were running away. I looked blankly at Tlexula.

"If they reach the curve at that pace," he said, "they will go over the cliff."

I had no time to reply before the carriage came in sight, swaying from side to side like a feather behind the racing horses. The box was empty, and the reins were trailing on the ground. In the carriage, clinging to the side, sat the French Consul's wife with her little girl in her arms. When she saw us she shrieked out for help, and the horses redoubled their speed. They were almost upon us when Tlexula sprang into the middle of the road.

How he stopped those horses I don't know to this day, but stop them he did. He caught their heads before they had time to swerve, and brought them up almost into the air. A yard further and they would have gone straight over the precipice. His strength was more than marvellous—it was as if the furious animals and the heavy carriage had suddenly come into contact with a rock.

The shock shook the doors open, and the Consul's wife dropped, rather than jumped, from her perilous position, and fell fainting at my feet.

I propped her up against the cliff, and went to take the child out of the carriage. The little thing was only



about three years old, and too young to realise the awful fate it had just escaped. It laughed as I lifted it off the seat, and evidently considered the affair a race arranged for its own special amusement.

Tlexula was still standing before the horses, soothing them and stroking their velvety noses with his disengaged hand. They drooped their heads and shivered as he touched them, and seemed ashamed of their conduct.

"Wonderfully intelligent things, horses," he remarked, in very matter-of-fact tones. "Move out of the way, Bazarac, while I turn them round."

I obeyed, and went to attend to the Consul's wife. She was still insensible, and we had no restoratives at hand.

"I will take her back to the Consulate," said Tlexula, "if you will put her into the carriage, and carry the child; I will lead the horses—they are quite safe now."

In this manner we proceeded to the Consulate, to be met at the gate by the Consul himself, in a state of distraction, and unable to believe that his wife and child were not only alive but unhurt. We had some difficulty in persuading him of this, and when we at last succeeded in our efforts, his gratitude was boundless. It was several hours later when we returned to the Casa Marciera, and then we found that the news of our adventure had reached there before us.

"You'll have some fresh coffee in a moment," said Marciera, looking up from the table. "Upon my word, Tlexula,

you are an exciting person, going and saving people's lives in this way—the next thing will be a murder, or a suicide, I suppose."

To my utter surprise Tlexula turned



"A BLUE CHRYSANTHEMUM"

deadly white, and dropped into a chair as though he had been shot. In a moment Marciera, flinging off his flippant manner, was beside him.

Tlexula waved him off.

"No, no," he said, "I'm all right. I think I'll go and sit down in the next room, if you don't mind."



He went. When Marciera and I rejoined him he was sitting at the piano.

"Do you feel better?" inquired Marciera, tenderly. He was keenly alive to the effect of his unfortunate remark. Tlexula began to play.

"Yes. Get your violin."

Marciera got it, and stood awaiting further orders.

"Second Spanish Fantasia," directed Tlexula.

They began it, and I sat listening and watching the tenor's face. The same strange expression which I had noticed before passed across it, and his eyes had a wide-open, strained look. Marciera, engrossed in his music, was not attending to him, and as I looked I distinctly saw the woman in blue appear behind Tlexula's seat. She bent over him until

her hand rested on his shoulder. He turned his head, and I felt sure he saw her. The light that surrounded her was reflected in his face, and she looked down at him with a smile. He went on playing, but gradually the blue figure grew indistinct, and a curious mist seemed to rise between me and the piano. I rubbed my eyes and looked again. The accompaniment to the Second Spanish Fantasia was drawing softly to a close, and when the last chord died away I sprang up with a cry.

"Marciera!" I shouted. "Marciera!"

He turned quickly and almost dropped his Guarnerius. The piano-stool was unoccupied, and the music closed—and across the keys which the vanished tenor's fingers had last touched lay a Blue Chrysanthemum.





# A LITTLE SHIP WAS ON THE SEA



WRITTEN BY H. D. LOWRY. ILLUSTRATED BY H. R. MILLAR



THE Visitor had been writing during the afternoon, and the end of it all was disappointment. There were private matters, vague and hardly to be defined in words, that made him discontented with the whole wide world, and, beyond all, at enmity with himself. He ceased from his labours, and the quiet of his cottage lodging began to prey on him, until he could bear with it no longer. He took his cap and went to get comfort with Doris.

She was lying on the hearth-rug, a book of fairy-tales open before her, and her dog was at her side. Both welcomed the new-comer. "If you have come to dinner," said Doris, "you will have to wait a long time. They have gone to a garden-party at Lanjestyn, and it is a long drive back. Are you very well?"

The Visitor sat down beside her on the hearth-rug in a curious lazy way he had. "I'm quite well in my body," he said, "but I am not a bit happy. And yet there is nothing wrong."

Doris stretched out a hand and touched him lightly, so that he knew she understood. "I know," she said softly.

There was silence for a little while. "Will they be really long?" he asked at last. "I am not going to have dinner alone."

"I expect they'll be an hour or two," she said. "What shall we do?"

The Visitor reflected. "It is a lovely evening," he answered. "Do you think we might go down to the harbour and look up at the village? I should be better tempered if we were down by the sea."

"I'll get a hat," said Doris promptly, "and may 'Christmas' come?"

The dog answered for himself, and so they quickly descended to the harbour. A little pier runs out from the shore, then turns at right angles, and wards some hundred yards or more of it from the onslaught of the sea. They walked slowly to and fro, with the lights of the village running up the hill beyond the water. They had the swell of the harbour in their nostrils; they could hear the quiet movements of the sea, the broken sounds that told of life on the hill. They looked beyond the harbour



wall into the dusk that brooded over the sea, and Doris did not speak, until the Visitor drew in a great breath of the clear air and sighed contentedly.

"I knew you wouldn't mind soon," she said.

"You are a very wise child," he answered. "I don't mind a bit. But what have you been thinking of? I'm sure there was something."

The twilight had deepened while they promenaded on the pier. The lights on the hillside shone yellower through the thicket of masts and rigging in the harbour; and the figures that moved now and again on its further side were shadows hardly to be distinguished. Doris gazed out at the sea. "It is the Galilee ship," she said dreamily. "I was watching that big light which rises and falls so gently and wondering if it were the ship waiting. Do you think there is a storm coming up? It would hardly be there if the sea were going to be calm much longer."

The little waves lifted and fell most gently. "What do you mean, Doris?" said the Visitor, turning to watch the light. "I never heard of the ship. There will be no storm for a long time, if I know anything of the weather."

"You know how there was a great tempest on the Sea

of Galilee, so that the little ship was covered with waves? And the disciples saw that Christ was sleeping, and were afraid. So they called on Him to save them, and He spoke to the waves. Then there was a great calm, and the moonlight came on the waters, and the ship glided towards the harbour in safety. That is the ship I mean."

"Tell me everything," entreated the Visitor.



"DORIS GAZED OUT TO SEA



"Do you think the ship fell to pieces afterwards, like the boats down by the slips when they are old? I thought you knew about fisher people and sailors. It is a thing that every fisherman knows, and every fisherman's wife: the Galilee ship is still on the sea, and never a storm

"I tell you everything," said the child, "because you seem to know so much, and then you understand. But I can't remember when I was in danger. Perhaps it was long ago—even before I was a mermaid in the days I told you of. I remember it all in the same way, and



"THEN THE SHIP CAME"

can wreck it. It travels on all the seas, but only those who have been in danger know of it, and afterwards they do not tell, for it is a beautiful thing to know, and they keep it to think over."

"But when were you in danger, Doris?" asked the Visitor. "And why do you tell me?"

it does not seem long ago, except that I must always have known it. The night was dark, and the great waves broke over the deck, so that we were wet, and cold, and afraid. Some one had tied me to the mast, and I sang the sea-hymn that you taught me (isn't it strange that I must have known it then, long and



long before I knew you?), but the wind beat on my face like a flapping sail, and I think the sailors did not hear."

"Sing the hymn now," said the Visitor softly, and Doris sang to the accompanying lap of quiet waves.

*Master and Lord, O come Thou near,  
Rebuke the waters once again:  
The dark night shuts us round with fear,  
And awful is Thine angry main.*

*Master and Lord, we pray to Thee,  
That Thou wilt bring us to the land;  
Silence the storm, make still the sea  
Thou holdest in Thine hollowed hand.*

*But chiefly for this grace we pray:  
That Thou wilt purge our hearts of sin,  
And keep them clean until the day  
That Thou shalt choose to enter in.*

*Master and Lord, on Thee we call,  
Out of this dark and awful night;  
For Thou alone canst save us all  
And change this darkness into light.*

"I sang on in spite of the wind, and suddenly a wonderful thing happened; for in a second it grew utterly quiet, so that I could sing no longer. It was still dark, but you felt just as you do a moment before the moon rises: you knew that something beautiful was coming, and you waited. Then the ship came. There was no more wind. It moved through the waters as a cloud floats in the sky, and somehow our ship followed it. Everyone was quiet, for the ship was all surrounded with a lovely golden light, so that we could only half see the people on its deck. But we knew who they were, and we should have been afraid if we had not felt so wonderfully safe.

"The sea was still quiet, and we moved quickly after the other ship. I suppose that I was tired after the storm,

for presently I grew more and more contented, and in the end I fell asleep."

"And afterwards?" said the Visitor.

"Long afterwards I woke, and at first I wondered where I was. It was a beautiful still night, and all the stars were shining. We were at anchor in the harbour, and the sailors were sleeping, tired out with fighting the storm. They lay resting on the deck, and none of them was afraid any longer, for they had known the ship and its crew. There were a few lights shining in the village, but the only sound was the noise of the stream that comes down the valley. So I sat on the deck and waited till the sunlight came, and then we all went ashore."

"And had they also seen the ship that saved you?"

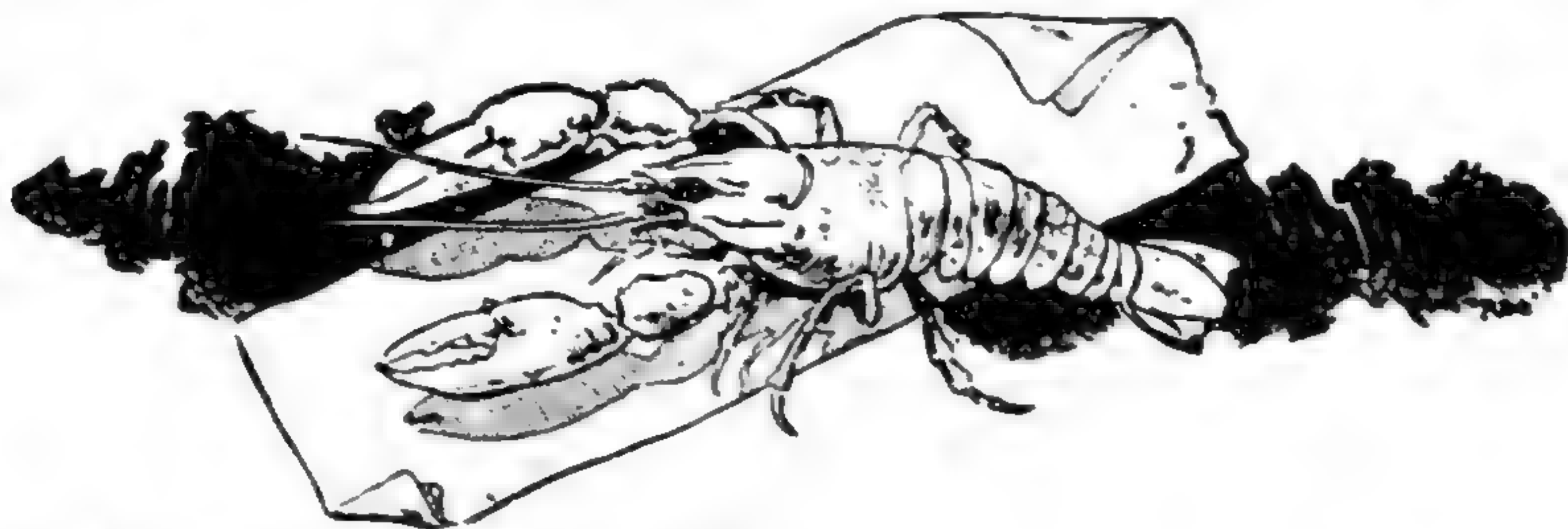
"They could not help it; but they did not say a word. The thing was too beautiful to talk about: they kept it to think of in their hearts. But they would never forget, and all the people who go down into the sea have the same secret."

"I have been often on the sea, and sometimes in danger, but I never saw the ship. I must look out for it. But why did you tell me, Doris?"

Doris looked up gravely out of the twilight. "Because I knew you would understand, and because you were not happy. But I can see that you are happier now, and . . . Ought we to go back to dinner?"

The Visitor looked about him and saw that the night had fallen. "I am afraid we must," he said, "I am afraid we must. But the harbour is just beginning to be pleasant, and I love the sea better now that I know the secret."

Then they went back through the village to the house on the hill.







WRITTEN BY J. A. FLYNN ILLUSTRATED BY J. MACFARLANE

IT had been raining softly all day, and in the evening the wind got up and drove the showers upon the windows in intermittent bursts. I was tired of tossing upon my pillows, and wondering if the headache would ever cease, tired of closing my ears to the plashing upon the ledges and the pattering at the panes. So I closed my eyes wearily and listened to the voice of the rain, with its message from the departed. O, the foolishness of man, who thinks that he can forget! There comes a sound, a perfume, a word, a song, and the past springs upon him out of the dark.

There was an afternoon, said the voice, autumns ago, when she met me in the rain. We stood where a big tree sheltered us with its withering leaves, and laughed at the showers that fell suddenly from the branches above.

"I scarcely thought you would come, Lorry," I said, "so I am especially glad to see you."

She shook the wet from her golf cap and smiled.

"Did you think that rain, or fire, or

anything, would keep me from trying to get what I wanted? Obstinate me!" she rejoined in her soft, rippling voice.

"And you wanted me?"

I bent over her, and she looked up with her eyes dancing.

"Why, yes, I suppose so, you solemn old dear."

"And you mean to keep me?" We quarrelled so often.

She looked up at me with big eyes and serious. "Ah! I don't know. You see I am a creature of fancies and moods. You will probably lose all patience with me at last. O yes, you will—it's no use shaking your head. 'Some things in life are too important to make game of, Laura,' she quoted, mimicking my gravest manner. 'It would be well if you realised this.' You will say something of that kind again, you know."

"And then?"

"We shall quarrel."

"Seriously?"

"Seriously."

"And afterwards?"

"You will console yourself with your books. I *hate* your books. There!"

"And you will console yourself with someone else." My voice was bitter. It is my way to take things seriously.

"With someone who can laugh! But"—she laid her hand upon my arm—"you needn't be cross this afternoon, when I am so nice and good."

So I took her little hands in mine and drew her to me; and kissed her wet cheeks and eyes and made much of her.

"If it would only rain always!" she cried passionately. "If it would thunder, and lighten, and snow, and hail, just to try and part us! Then I should be sure to come, and we shouldn't quarrel any more. O, Harry, there are plenty of better fair-weather sweethearts; but I should be truest in a storm. If ever we quarrel badly, ask me to come when it blows and rains—when you are in trouble, my dear—and I shall come!"

Ah! little Lorry, it was a winning way that you had—such a very winning way. But you were wilful, and I was obstinate. You tried me too far, my dear. It was a mistake, everyone said, our engagement. And we ended it, which was the cruellest mistake of all.

There was another time, said the voice, when I came a thousand miles through storm and rain; when I reached her house, with the rain dripping from my face, the blinds were drawn down.

"I understand," I said, quietly, holding on to the side of the door. "Let me see her;" and I staggered up the stairs.

There was a smile upon her face, as if her eyes would open soon, and she would laugh and tease. Her hands were folded across her breast, and there was a toy ring hidden in her bosom that I had given her when she was a child. "She wished it," someone sobbed, supporting me a little. They were to give me her kindest regards, if I seemed grieved, they said; and her "very, very best love," if I was terribly sorry and sad.

Then there were a few months of grief that was almost madness; a few years of sorrow; and at last they told me that I must forget. And sometimes I thought that I had forgotten.

"Ask me to come when it blows and

rains." To-night it blew and rained, but Lorry was beyond call. "No!" thundered the rain at the windows, with a crash that shook the panes. "No!" shrieked the wind, with sudden passion. I opened my eyes and sat up on the couch. My face in the mirror looked drawn and white, and slowly smiled a compassionate smile. "I am growing delirious," I murmured impatiently, as I walked to the window and opened it. The rain beat upon my upturned face, and the wind blew the light curtains upon me with a rush, as it were her dress. No; there was nothing—only dark. I closed the window with a sigh, and went back to the couch, for it seemed that I could sleep. The rain-drops on my cheeks were the touch of her lips, methought, and her cool fingers were closing my weary eyelids. The rain upon the windows pattered the words of a little song which she had written in one of her eerie moods:

#### THE SORROWFUL WAY.

*Love that is born of the sun,  
Love that is fire and light  
Dies when the day is done—  
Long is the love of the night!*

*Love of the summer noon still,  
Love of the zephyr warm  
Flies when the winds blow chill—  
Give me the love of the storm!*

*List! there are tears in the rain;  
Hidden the skies above.  
Calling, I call in vain—  
Faithless—my summer love!*

"O, Lorry, I do not forget," I tried to call; but something—was it a hand?—closed my lips. Surely she had come in the wind and rain to sing me to sleep? I could feel my heavy eyes smiling, and my arm slipping heedlessly from my breast on to the couch—or was it her dress? "Lorry," I cried softly; or, perhaps, only thought, for my voice had no sound. "Lorry!"

Then the headache went, and I opened my eyes upon a dim room—if it were a room—and felt no surprise that she sat by my side, with her face smiling and her lips quivering a little, as I had





"SURELY SHE HAD COME IN THE WIND AND RAIN TO SING ME TO SLEEP?"

seen her so often. She shook the rain carelessly from her dripping garments, and bent quickly over me between laughing and crying, which was always her way.

"Why did you not call me before?" she asked impatiently—it was wonderful how little she had changed! "Did I not tell you I would come?"

I tried to speak, but my voice failed me, and she shook her head.

"You must not speak," she said. "because you are asleep. To-morrow you will think it was a dream. Dear boy"—she laid her hand caressingly upon my head—"it is *not* a dream."

Then she smiled at me, and I smiled at her, and we looked at one another for a long, long time, so that there was no need of words. Only once, when the rain came with a sudden burst, I thought

she heard a voice calling, and half roused, fearing that she might leave me.

"Rest, dear," she said softly, "rest, or I must go. Rest, because it is a dream, you will think to-morrow." Then she laughed her old, quick laugh. "Dear boy," she said again, "it is not a dream." My eyes questioned eagerly.

"You cannot understand, my dear," she murmured, "though you are so much cleverer than I. But some day I shall be the first to tell you. I am waiting for you. You know I am waiting, dear?"

Her face was radiant, and my lips framed a vow that I would be true. There came no sound, but she understood.

"Of course, dear," she said, simply. "Of course, we were always true; always must be true. That is why—ah! some day you will understand!" She bent lovingly down and kissed me, and I smiled.

Again the wind and the rain clamoured at the window, and she looked up and nodded in her old, impulsive way.

"I must go," she said, "but sometimes

I shall come again in the rain. You will listen, dear, and know. You will remember when it beats and drives that I am *there* waiting."

"But in the sunshine?" The words burst from my lips, and in an instant the dark sprang upon me, and I clasped her wildly in my arms, and drew her face to mine. Her tears fell over me, but her voice was happy when she spoke.

"In the sunshine—always—everywhere—I shall be waiting. O, my love!" Then the darkness swam round and she was gone.

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When I woke upon the couch, the light was streaming in across the rugs with which they had covered me as I slept. The headache and the rain had gone; and as I opened my eyes a sunbeam slid swiftly from my pillow and vanished; and I sat up with a contented smile. For I knew that, in rain or shine, she was watching; and my heart was strong.





# The Golden Scarab

WRITTEN BY J. W. BRESLIN. ILLUSTRATED BY M. B. SALMON



I HAD come to hate the sight of it, yet I could not keep long away from the shop where it was displayed. I desired it, but told myself that it would be folly to

purchase it, and, naturally, in the end I became its possessor. To be the cause of so much vacillation it was a very trivial object, merely an absolute facsimile in gold of an ancient Egyptian scarab. It was about the size of the palm of a man's hand, and was fashioned of pure gold. It was hollow, a mere shell, to judge by its weight, but the closest examination failed to detect any join or opening on its surface. It was inscribed with hieroglyphics, which, despite the plausibility of their arrangement, I was quite unable to decipher. Beyond the exceptional material employed, if genuine, or if modern, that any artist should have thought it worth his labour to counterfeit with such extraordinary precision so common an amulet, my fascination was inexplicable. It had caught my eye as it lay among a miscellaneous collection of jewellery and trinkets on a tray in the window of a pawnbroker's sale-room, and for weeks I had gone almost daily to look at it, and turn away, resisting the temptation to which I at length succumbed.

I placed it in my pocket, and hurried home, fingering it as I went with a delightful sense of possession; and in the seclusion of my study I examined it in detail. The metal was bright and clean, and free from scratches, as if it had just left the engraver's hands, but it bore no trace of signature or hall-mark, and I could not decide whether the workmanship was of recent or antique date. I laid the scarab on my knee, and fell to

musing as to when it was made, and why and by whom.

Night came down, creeping out from corners and recesses till the whole room was in darkness, but I did not notice it. I had gradually become aware of a peculiar, sweet, pungent odour, growing more insistent as the twilight deepened, with a strange sultry oppressiveness, which roused me to vague speculation as to its origin, and I remembered it as the odour which is felt, only in less degree, when unwrapping the clinging cerements of a mummy. I looked up to see if a large glass case, or cabinet, containing a very fine example, which had once been a priest of Osiris, was in any way damaged. I rubbed my eyes and looked again. I did not see the case, but it was not that which made me doubtful of my vision. As my eyes travelled to the case, I should have caught the dark outline of one of two rhododendrons which graced my somewhat prim and restricted front garden, but instead of the blurred outlines visible through the dusk of an English evening, what I saw was a grandiose vision of gigantic buildings ranged in sharply contrasted lines of light and shade, and beyond a cool glow where the star-lit splendour of an Eastern night was reflected from a vast expanse of water. I looked eagerly, greedily, for I saw Egypt, the Egypt of the Pharaohs, not dead, deserted, overpiled with the dust of centuries, but full of the stately pomp of life. The streets, the temples, the palaces, sparkled with innumerable lights; slow-pacing processions and hustling throngs moved hither and thither; the house-tops were crowded with men and women, resting, feasting, singing; the river alive with boats gliding through the cool night air. I saw Egypt as not the most learned could reconstruct it, not as it might live

in the assuredness of dreams, but vivid beyond conception in palpitating reality.

A sudden impression that there was someone standing beside me caused me to turn round, and when I looked again, reluctant to loose my eyes from that wonderful vision, I saw only the familiar outlines of the rhododendron and the railings beyond. I gazed vacantly, incuriously, merely conscious that what I had seen was no longer there, till roused by a voice at my ear: "What, Swinton, moping among your plunderings from the past?"

I looked up and saw my old friend Dr. Rainsford, and pulled my wits together to greet him. I lit the gas, and as I did so he noticed my latest acquisition and inquired, "Surely something new?"

"Yes," I said; "it has been a source of temptation to me for weeks, and as you see, I could not resist the temptation to buy. It is a very common form of amulet, but it has some exceptional features. The material is unusual; it is hollow, and yet it is not a box, as I have examined it carefully with a powerful glass. The third feature is that I cannot make head or tail of the hieroglyphics engraved on it. I must take it to Faucit and see if he can interpret them."

"But," objected Rainsford, "is it not possibly a counterfeit, and the symbols merely superficial in the *vraisemblance*?"

"No, I think not. A copyist is bound to make some mistake, and I have found none: and though I cannot decipher the inscription, it has a certain ordered appearance, from which I gather that it has a meaning. It has been an ungovernable abscission to me. I brought it home this afternoon, and have been poring over it till the approach of darkness, which, by the way, reminds me that a most wonderful hallucination was dispelled by your entry. My mind was certainly deep in things Egyptian, and, happening to look out of the window there by the mummy, I believed I saw, not my suburban front garden, but ancient and majestic Egypt in all the glory of actuality. The more I think of it, the more astonished I am, as my

vision differed in many details from what I should have imagined according to my knowledge, and yet I somehow fancy that these details were not the mere irrational variations of a dream."

My friend, instead of laughing at me as I expected, took the matter seriously. "It is certainly very strange. I cannot say you did not see the truth, nor yet can I admit that it was more than a vivid reminiscence of your knowledge of this particular subject. There is no doubt that to a certain extent the past is existent to us, as shown in dreams, which, though mostly absurd farragoes, yet sometimes represent old experiences with startling reality. At times I could almost say that if our own past lives in ourselves, why not the past of the world, somewhere, somehow? Why should it be more wonderful than that with the aid of some clock-work we should see and hear incidents enacted thousands of miles from us and in the grave of time past?"

"You are wandering in very thorny ways," I remarked with a laugh; "you might as well speculate as to the origin of life."

"And why not," he cried warmly. "I am a surgeon, a sort of tinker who sews and solders the battered vessels come from other hands than his, careless of whence they come or where they go, their use or abuse, yet I cannot help wondering at times whether the human body is simply an exquisite adjustment of parts, or whether there is something behind it all. Life, yet life which flies by a gash or pin-prick, which flames or flickers with its containing matter, and still may be a spark when the organism is perfect, a conflagration when it is a wreck. It is a strange speculation."

"Strange indeed," I said; "but I suppose your profession will not be content till it has discovered the fount and origin of life, and succeeded in separating it from the body and keeping it bottled on your shelves for supply to all who may require it."

"Well, I shouldn't be surprised out of reason if something that way came about; but we have ascended to somewhat too rare an atmosphere, let us





"LET ME KNOW IF YOU SOLVE THAT CRUX"

change the subject." And our conversation took another turn.

As Rainsford took his leave his eye caught the golden scarab lying on the table, and he said jestingly:

"Let me know if you solve that crux. The old Egyptians have been credited with some curious knowledge."

"O, certainly," I rejoined, in the same tone. "I may find some long-lost secret;" and as he left I took up the scarab to put it in the place which I

had long since decided it should occupy. This was on one of the shelves in the glass case containing the mummy and my collection of antiquities. As I moved some objects to make room for it, I had a momentary impression that the mummy was stirred, and instinctively put out my hand to steady it, when I found that it was beyond the reach of any accidental touch. I tried if the supports on which it lay were in position; but they were quite firm, and I

concluded that my eye must have been deceived by some chance reflection in the glass.

For some time after this I was occupied with other matters, and forgot the golden scarab and its indecipherable inscription. It was recalled to my mind by chance, and I decided to call the next day upon Professor Faucit, the eminent Egyptologist, and get his opinion. On my way home I was passed by a newsboy shouting, "Special! Mysterious murder! Escape of the assassin!" And I bought a paper from him and thrust it in my pocket.

On reaching home I opened the journal, and was profoundly shocked to read that Faucit had been found murdered in his study. He had evidently been engrossed in the examination of some papyri, and had been struck down unawares from behind. So far as was known there had been no robbery, and the only trace of the murderer were some footprints on the ground below the window of the Professor's room. These were curiously long and narrow, and appeared to have been made by a person walking in his stocking soles. There was no known motive for the crime, and the only plausible explanation was that the murderer had come unexpectedly into the room and attacked the Professor in an impulse of fear for his own safety if discovered. I noticed that my friend Rainsford had been called, and as he had an appointment with me for that afternoon I looked forward to receiving from him a less sensational and more accurate statement of the facts.

While pacing up and down the room I noticed the trace of dirty fingers on the door of the glass case. With the strange aptitude of the mind for trivialities in even the most solemn circumstances, I resented this untidiness and wiped off the marks with my handkerchief. In doing so I noticed that the smears ran close to the edge of the polished frame as if the door had been open when they were made. This, however, was absurd. The door fitted closely into a velvet-lined recess, and could only be opened by inserting the key into the lock and using it as a handle. A glance

told me that the various articles lay on their shelves undisturbed, and I knew my servants would not venture to closer acquaintance with the grim, drawn countenance of the long-dead priest of Osiris.

The matter would never have recurred to my mind but for another circumstance, also of trivial moment if taken by itself. I was about to close one of the windows which happened to be open when I noticed on one of the panes, but on the outside, similar finger-marks. They were more strongly impressed, and were of a faint reddish-brown colour. This appeared as if the person who had left the stains on the case had entered by the window. I went outside to see if I could trace any sign of entrance, and on the narrow strip of flower border by the wall I found the impress of a foot set down, half on the grass, half on the soft mould. It appeared to have been made by a long, narrow foot covered with a stocking. As I looked at it a nameless horror crept upon me that the vile being who had done Faucit to death must have entered my dwelling after the deed, Heaven knows with what purpose.

Rainsford entered from the road as I was standing there, and called to me, but I was incapable of speech, and could only beckon him to me.

"Swinton," he said, "anything wrong? You're as white as chalk."

For answer I pointed to the mark on the border. He stooped to examine it, but immediately started back. "Great Heaven, it's the same! How did you know?"

I told him how I had made the discovery, and on his advice sent for the police. They came and made a careful and minute search, but made no further discovery. The only explanation they could give was that the man must have found the window partly open, and entered the room and tried to secure the only portable object of value in it, the golden scarab, but had been scared and fled. As they left the house one remarked: "It's odd he came to you, sir; another gentleman with a fancy for them old Egyptian things."

The days went by, and the murder of Faucit remained an unsolved mystery.



I fell back into my usual routine, only very particular to see that all the windows on the basement were duly fastened before retiring for the night. I spent hours of vain labour over the hieroglyphics on the scarab. One evening, after

murdered, and another developing monomania. But that reminds me of something I have to tell you. A man was brought to me this morning. He had been attacked and half strangled quite close to your gate by a Hindu-looking



"I POINTED TO THE MARK ON THE BORDER"

long puzzling, I was sitting with it in my hand, when I saw again a wonderful vision of old, dead Egypt. Something drew away my attention, and, as before, it had vanished when I looked again.

The next evening I told Rainsford, but he laughed at me. "This locality is getting notorious. One Egyptologist

fellow, all bundled up in dirty linen, and smelling most atrocious. I use his own description. Might it not be some insane Asiatic, and possibly the murderer of Faucit?"

"O," I said, carelessly, "more likely some quick-tempered native against whom the fellow may have been airing

his drunken wit. There are two or three Hindu servants about here."

"Very probable," admitted Rainsford, dropping his hastily-found clue, and the conversation on the subject ended.

I later made a discovery which I confess I kept to myself, as my friend, in spite of his transcendental discourse on hallucinations, might have insisted on a course of matter-of-fact treatment. It was that I could call up my visions of old Egypt by merely holding the golden scarab in my hand and looking in the direction of the case containing my Egyptian relics. They were invariably night scenes, and the most prominent actors in them were the priesthood of Osiris. Sometimes I beheld the celebration of strange rites amid the vast splendours of some mighty temple, at others a ceremonial procession through the streets or by the banks of the great river. The scenes were of amazing vividness and reality, but I could only see them on the approach of evening, and they stood out bolder and sharper as the shadows deepened, and I accepted them without question as to the reality of the life they pictured to my eyes.

I had indulged myself in these waking dreams on several occasions when an incident occurred which brought them to an abrupt conclusion. One morning early, and while it was yet dark, I was awakened by a thunderous knocking at the house-door. I hurried downstairs, and found a policeman telling the excited servants that he had seen a man enter the house by my study-window. He and another constable had been seeking shelter from a slight shower under some trees, on the opposite side of the road to my house, when they saw an Indian-looking sort of fellow creep stealthily in at the gate, push up the window, and disappear into the house. He answered in every detail to the description of the man who had committed the assault some days previously, and who was also suspected to be the murderer of Professor Faucit. I told the constable he might make sure of his man, as the door of the room was locked, and handing him the key he opened the door, and flashed his lamp into the room. We could see

nothing, though he directed the light into every corner, beyond the usual furniture of the room. The other constable, seeing his watch outside to be no longer necessary, now joined us, and we entered the room, and lit the gas. There was not the slightest sign of an intrusion. The windows were all properly fastened, and I pointed this out to the two policemen, who stood confounded, and I fear I spoke somewhat sharply to them.

"I fear, my good men," I said, "you've been dreaming. There has been no person in this room since I left it, except this gentleman," pointing to the mummy, "and as he's been dead these two or three thousand years, he is not likely to be the man, but you can satisfy yourselves," and I offered to open the case. They, however, declined, somewhat hastily, and left the room, protesting that they could have sworn they saw the man enter the house. As they went out I overheard one remark, "It must have been the ghost of that blessed old mummy."

I felt a bit nervous, and called after them that they might knock up Dr. Rainsford and ask him to come down to me.

Half an hour later Rainsford arrived, and I told him of the incident. My nerves had got a considerable shock, and I must confess I could not help coupling it in some way with my curious visions. He thought I had been worrying too much over that impossible inscription, and that the occurrence unfortunately fitted in with the reveries in which I had been indulging. He asked if the constables had examined the room, and I replied that they had done nothing beyond satisfying themselves that it was empty. "Besides," I added, "the door and windows were fastened." He considered for a few minutes, then said:

"The door and windows might be unfastened from inside. Are you addicted to sleep-walking?"

I had no knowledge of any such tendency, but he said it was quite possible, and continued: "There was a sharp shower at the time. Anyone entering from the wet lawn must have left some trace."



He examined the window, but there were no marks discernible there. A tall man, however, could have stepped over the sill without more than grazing it. We could find no marks on the carpet which could be distinguished from those left by the boots of the constables. We then examined the hall, but also without result. Rainsford admitted himself puzzled. There was not the faintest indication of infraction, and yet it seemed impossible that two men should have been so completely deceived. He continued, however, to move about the room with a light, apparently determined either to prove or disprove the story.

Suddenly he stopped before the glass case. After a few minutes' examination he inquired, "Did you open this?"

"No; why should I? There was no occasion."

"Well," he answered, "look here!" and holding the light in his hand at an angle he pointed to the floor of the case, and I saw some moisture glistening on the polished wood as if a damp cloth had rested against it for a moment.

I stood looking helplessly at the mark, while Rainsford seemed to be considering the next step to be taken. He came quickly to a resolution and asked me to open the door of the cabinet. I did so, and he said, "Now this," pointing to the plate-glass cover to the mummy case. I stared at him in amazement, but he insisted, and together we lifted off the cover. He bent down and passed his hand carefully over the swathings. As he felt the wrappings about the feet he cried out, "Great Heaven, it is impossible! Swinton, feel this."

I put my hand on the wrappings. They were slightly damp.

We stood there trembling in an agony of fear at we knew not what monstrous inconceivable horror glimpsed at through this discovery. Rainsford was the first to recover, pulling himself together with a mighty effort. He felt the hands of the mummy, the drawn features, every portion of the body, but they remained rigid and unyielding.

We sat down, but could not bring ourselves to give utterance to the thoughts which forced themselves upon us. Our

eyes kept wandering to that enigmatic face retaining still a faint umbra of life despite the centuries of the tomb. At length I whispered, "For Heaven's sake, let us get away from it," and we removed to another room.

"It is incredible, but what can be the truth?" said Rainsford when we had somewhat recovered from the first shock of our discovery, but shirking still to put in words our inmost thoughts. "I cannot believe it; but I am certainly going to get to the bottom of it all;" and before parting it was arranged that we should keep watch in the room on the following night.

I passed the day between fits of feverish excitement and nervous depression, alternately longing for and dreading the approach of darkness.

There was a large recess curtained off one end of my study which would furnish us with an admirable place for concealment. It had at one time been a separate room, and had a door leading into it from another part of the house. We sat late trying in vain to converse, and the time seemed interminable till the clock struck the hour at which I usually retired, and we left the room, carefully locking the door behind us. We then noiselessly entered the recess by the other door and took up our position. Rainsford had provided himself with a revolver and a portable electric lamp, by means of which we would be able to immediately procure light.

The room was in total darkness, and we could not distinguish any object in it. Above all we could not discern the faintest outline of the cabinet, as it stood between two windows and in the deepest shadow; but every time I turned my eyes towards it I seemed to see the grim, strange face of its occupant. We had waited some time—how long I cannot say—in profound silence, when Rainsford's hand tightened on my arm, and I heard a faint, tinkling sound followed by an almost imperceptible rustling, and the window curtains were drawn gently aside. We saw dimly a tall figure stoop and raise the sash, then step out into the darkness.



"LIVING OR DEAD . . . IT STOOD FACING US"

The same inconceivable fear which had taken hold of us upon the previous night again held us bound, and it was some minutes before we came to ourselves and struck a light. Our first

glance was towards the case. It was empty; the mummy was gone. I felt my head reeling, and fell heavily to the floor. I awoke to find Rainsford bending over me with a glass in his hand,



from which I drank greedily. My eyes kept wandering to the cabinet, but I could not bring myself to look at it.

"Pull yourself together, Swinton," said my friend. "We must see it out now. I could not leave you and follow the thing. Besides," he added, with a hysterical laugh, "I could not very well ask the first policeman I met to go with me in chase of an escaped mummy. We will wait for its return—for return it will, it must—and face it then."

How the long horror of that night passed I cannot remember. I tried in vain to steady my shaken nerves, and but for Rainsford would have fled from the room. He summoned his whole strength of will to meet whatsoever it might be that came and solve the mystery.

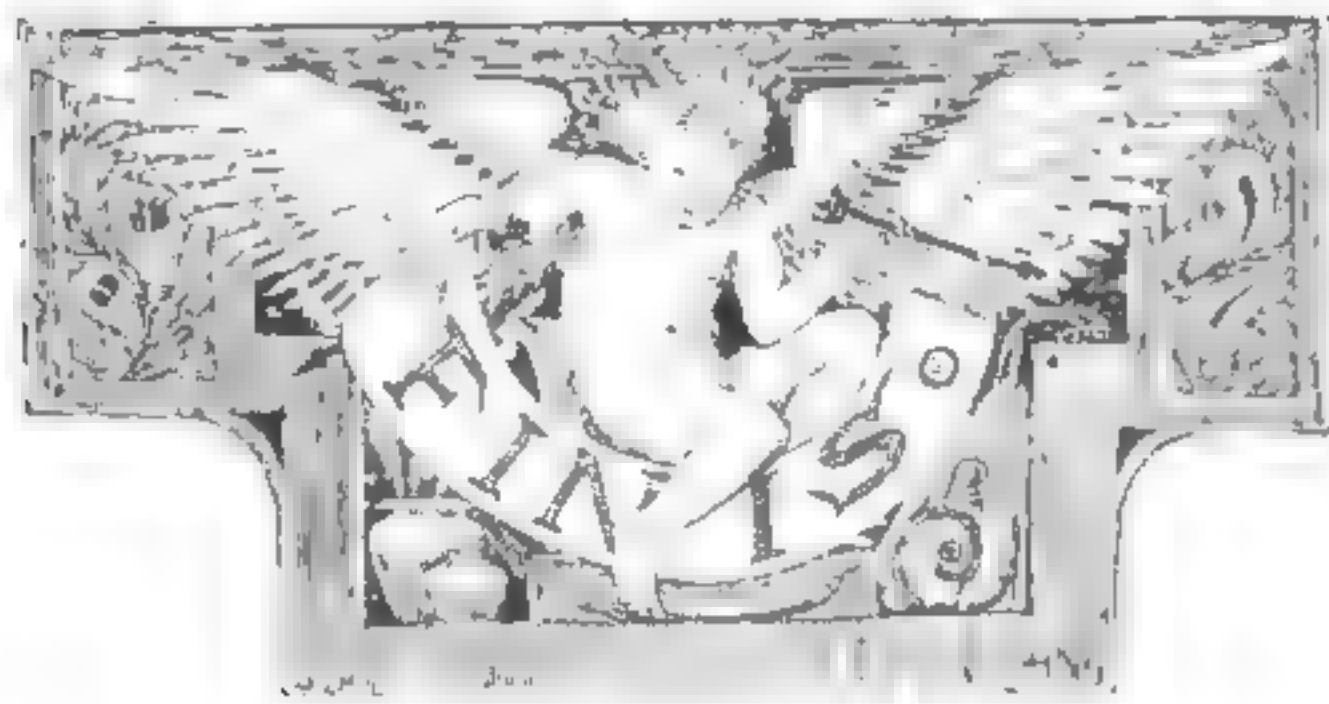
At last we heard the window-sash being moved, and at the faint rustling which followed Rainsford touched the button of the lamp, and at the same moment tore aside the curtains of our hiding-place.

I shrieked aloud at the strange vision disclosed by the sudden light. I saw right before me the figure, the shrivelled face of the long-dead priest of Osiris, and I saw the light of life glowing in the

great hollow orbits of his eyes. My fear fled, and my whole being seemed to be concentrated in the one faculty of sight. I gazed, without curiosity, without speculation, without dread; and I could not satisfy the hunger of my eyes. Living or dead, it—I cannot call it man—stood facing us, calm, inscrutable, mysterious, as when its countenance was first laid to the darkness of centuries. It raised one arm and took a step forward, and at the same moment a loud report echoed through the room. Rainsford had fired.

How can I describe what followed? There was no outcry, no fall, only a slow fluttering of the brown cerements to the floor. We rushed forward. There was nothing but a heap of ancient rags, thickly covered with a pungent, odorous dust, and in their midst we found the golden scarab, battered and dented by the bullet to the hollow within.

Horror gave place to a vague wonder, and Rainsford said slowly, "We cannot explain, we must accept. Perhaps, after all, we had better say we have been victims of an hallucination—in spite of these:" and he pointed to the empty mummy case and the pile of cerements whereon glittered the battered golden scarab.



# THE FAILURE OF BERNARD RALSTON.



WRITTEN BY AMY MONTAGUE. ILLUSTRATED BY "GUY"

## I.



HE picture was finished, and the painter laid down his palette and brushes and seated himself with an air of weariness in an arm-chair which faced the window.

A wintry gleam of sunshine broke out for a moment and illuminated the high, bare studio, glinting on the edge of a gold frame, touching here a landscape and there a figure amongst the pictures and sketches which hung on the walls or leaned against them, and dazzling the eyes of the artist as he sat looking dreamily out of the window.

Bernard Ralston's studio would not have made an artistic photograph for an illustrated interview. It was carpetless, and contained no furniture except some easels and three or four chairs, which were generally occupied by canvases piled one on the other.

The walls were painted green, and showed darker patches of colour where a picture had once hung, or been replaced by a smaller canvas.

At one end there was a dark green mark on the wall which had the form of

a cross. Once a crucifix had hung there, but since Bernard had begun his last picture he had taken it away.

The gleam of sunshine faded, and the room darkened. Bernard looked round and shivered. The fire in the huge black grate was nearly out, and he got up to put on some coals.

As he moved across the room, there came the sound of a quick step on the stairs, and directly afterwards, a woman's voice, saying with a little breathless laugh—

"First on the left? Thanks, don't come up; I'll announce myself."

The next instant there was a tap at the door, which was opened before Bernard had time to speak, and a very lovely girl appeared on the threshold and stood there smiling.

"You!" stammered Bernard, "why you told me you had an engagement this afternoon."

"So I had, but I got bored and came away, leaving a message for Aunt Eliza to say where I had gone. Won't she be angry? This is the first time I have ever been to your studio. Are you not charmed to see me?"





"A VERY LOVELY GIRL APPEARED ON THE THRESHOLD"

She put her hands on his shoulders and raised her face to his, and he blushed like a boy as he bent to kiss her.

They made a singular contrast as they stood there. Bernard, tall and slight, pale-faced and dark-eyed, a frail and boyish-looking figure, with every nerve supersensitive and quivering, while the

girl beside him seemed the very embodiment of health and physical beauty.

"What a miserable fire," she exclaimed, "and how thoroughly uncomfortable you do succeed in making yourself."

Then, as she caught sight of the just-finished picture,

"Ah! The picture for the Academy! The one you have been working at for the last twelve months, and would never allow me to see."

She went up to it as she spoke.

"Piccadilly Circus!" she cried, delightedly, "and exactly like it too. All the omnibuses, and fashionably dressed people, and errand boys, and everything. It's like Frith's 'Derby Day.' Why, what's this? Bernard, how extraordinary you are! What in the world made you do this?"

She turned and looked at him as she pointed to the central figure in the picture—a shadowy form of Christ bearing His cross.

Bernard made no reply, and there was a slight pause.

"What is it called?" asked Hilda Verney.

"Via Dolorosa."

"Are you going to send it to the Academy?"

"Yes."

"They won't take it."

"I daresay not."

"They would have done so if it had not been for that." And she pointed with a shocked air to the picture. "They'll say it is profane; and so it is. Almost blasphemous, in fact, I call it. It would be a perfect picture without it, but they will never accept it as it is. Can't you paint it out and put in something else?"

Bernard did not answer. He looked like a man under torture.

"No," continued Hilda, decisively, "the Academy will not take that; but you might send it round the provinces and charge sixpence or a shilling for admission to view it. You see it is decidedly sensational, and people like sensation now-a-days. You might make a good deal of money over it in that way."

"O my God, Hilda, don't talk like that," cried Bernard. "You don't know what that picture has cost me."



Hilda turned and looked at him in surprise.

"Ah, if you only knew," he went on vehemently. "Day after day, and night after night, I have stood in the street, making notes, studying faces, sketching men, women, and little children; and all the while my faith in God was slowly passing away from me, and my belief in humanity and all my hopes of better things to come. Look into the eyes of the Christ I have painted. What can you see there?"

"They are beautifully painted, of course, but—"

"There is failure written there. *Failure!* When I conceived that picture I told myself that I would stir the hearts of men and women to their deepest depths, and *make* them feel! Ah, Hilda, Hilda, I used to kneel in a

very agony of prayer before the crucifix my mother held out to me with her dying hands. Look, there is the mark on the wall where it used to hang. I strove to paint a living Christ, but, day by day, that Shadow grew beneath my hands—that mournful Shadow, with the eyes that speak to me of eternal failure, of death and sorrow and sin triumphant. I have painted that picture with my own heart's blood, Hilda, and it has killed me."

He was walking up and down the room as he talked, and Hilda looked at him in alarm.

"What is the matter with you, Bernard? I never saw you like this before. You make me wish I hadn't come. You must be ill. Why don't you send for a doctor?"

"Oh, you don't understand; you don't understand," he moaned.



"HILDA LEANED BACK IN THE ARMCHAIR



Then he began to laugh, almost hysterically.

"Sit down, dear, I'm not mad, though I look like it. Let's have some tea. Don't look at that any more. Turn your back on it."

He rang the bell and ordered tea, while Hilda leaned back in the armchair and surveyed her surroundings with a somewhat critical air.

"Why don't you have curtains? Surely a pretty Art muslin wouldn't shut out much light. When we are married I shall come down and give this miserable, untidy place a thorough turn-out, and make it pretty and comfortable. Nobody would think you were an artist to look at your surroundings."

He smiled. "When will you marry me, Hilda?"

"Oh, I don't know. Some day. Now and then I think I won't marry you at all, because you are so queer and funny at times. I wish you would try and get over it, and be more like other people. You said just now that you had lost your faith. Well, I think it is a very good thing if you have. Mother and Aunt Eliza have always been rather against my marrying you on account of your being a Roman Catholic. Of course it is not nearly so bad as if you were a Dissenter, but still, it is a great pity."

"What would you like me to be, Hilda?"

"Oh, just an ordinary Christian, like everybody else in decent society. Here comes the tea. I'm as hungry as a hunter. Do you take milk and sugar, Bernard? What funny little tea-spoons; and what a *darling* of a milk-jug! Where *did* you get it?"

She prattled on, never waiting for an answer, and Bernard, bending forward to take his cup from her hands, looked into her radiant blue eyes and loved her,

*As men that shall be swallowed of the sea  
Love the sea's lovely beauty—*

Presently there came a knock at the door, and a second visitor entered. He was a strongly-built man of middle height, with thick, curly hair, and a black beard which he wore trimmed to

a point. His brows projected over his bright, keen eyes, which were so deeply set as almost to appear sunken.

After greeting the lovers, he remarked with a rather comical smile,

"I come as the bearer of a message which duty and not inclination forces me to deliver. Your aunt, Miss Verney, is waiting at the door, and says you are to go to her at once."

"I'm in for a scolding," said Hilda, with a little grimace. "Bernard, come and put me into the carriage. Good-bye, Mr. Morris."

She went out, followed by Bernard, and George Morris turned to look at the picture.

Technically, it was a masterpiece, and George, who was an excellent art critic, regarded it with genuine admiration. Then he proceeded to study it from the emotional point of view as suggested by the title, "Via Dolorosa." Bernard had represented the figure of Christ bending wearily beneath His heavy cross, while all around Him surged the hurrying, indifferent crowd, each intent on his own business or pleasure, some serious and some smiling, but all with eyes turned away from Him who passed through their midst.

One alone seemed to be conscious of a Presence other than that of the crowd—a woman, with draggled skirts and haggard, painted cheeks. The end of the cross was just touching her shoulder, and she stood in a startled, listening attitude, as if her attention had been suddenly arrested.

But it was the face of the Christ which held George and compelled him to gaze, until a strange, indescribable feeling, arose within him as though his faith had been shaken to its very foundations, for the eyes, haunting and despairing, which looked out at him from the canvas, seemed to say, "My agony and My sacrifice have been all in vain."

For the rest, the picture merely conveyed a vivid impression of Piccadilly Circus about half-past eleven on a June morning.

George was still standing before it when Bernard returned, but the latter made no remark. He seated himself in the chair Hilda had just vacated, and passed his hands caressingly over the



cushioned arms on which her hands had rested.

In a few minutes his friend came and sat down opposite him.

"Bernard, that is a terrible picture," he said.

"So Hilda has just informed me," replied the painter. "As we went downstairs a moment ago, she said it was grossly profane, and in the worst possible taste."

"That aspect of the case had not presented itself to me," rejoined George, quietly. "But it is precisely the sort of remark I should have expected from her."

"Why don't you like Hilda, George?"

"My dear fellow," protested the other, "Miss Verney is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. It would be impossible to dislike anything half so lovely. She lacks but one thing."

"And that is — ?"

"A soul."

"There is a soul in everything beautiful."

"May it not be the reflection of one's own?"

Bernard shrugged his shoulders and was silent.

"Is the picture to be exhibited?" proceeded George.

"I shall send it to the Academy, although I don't imagine for one moment that they will accept it."

"I almost hope they will not."

Bernard laughed, but without mirth.

"You may think me fanciful," continued George, hurriedly, "but that picture conveys the most painful impression to my mind. Surely, when you began it a year ago, your object was not to destroy the little faith and hope that may yet remain in human hearts? You once told me the ambition of your life was to paint a great religious picture, but this —"

"Say no more," interrupted Bernard,

And after a pause, he added, "I am like a woman who has borne a dead child."

## PART II.

The Academy, as the representative of respectable British opinion in Art, refused Bernard's picture, but it ultimately found a place in another gallery,

where it attracted considerable attention.

Critics came in battalions, and alternately blessed and cursed it. The Art journals praised its technique, the daily papers discussed the taste, or want of taste, displayed in the choice of the subject, or speculated on the meaning thereof.

The religious papers warned their readers against it, or exhorted everyone to go and see it, while a French journalist described it as "one of the most crushing blows that has ever yet been aimed at superstition."

There was always a crowd before it, amongst which the artist himself was constantly to be found. If anyone recognised him he would slip away; but few people knew him by sight, and he was able to mingle with them and listen to their comments without observation.

Once a man spoke to him, a young clergyman whom Bernard had noticed many times before, always in the same place, with his eyes fixed upon the picture.

"What do you think of it?" he asked Bernard, abruptly.

"I hardly know how to answer you," replied the artist.

"Do you like it?"

"No."

"Nor do I. I hate it; yet a horrible fascination draws me to it day after day. I believe the man who painted it was possessed of devils. I tell you," he went on with rising excitement, "that when I get up and go out of this place, it is with a feeling of despair and horror upon me that almost drives me mad. I dread being alone, and I dread still more being with others, for out of every face those sad, despairing eyes confront me. *Via Dolorosa! Via Dolorosa!* It stretches beyond sight and imagination, and along its weary way suffering humanity for ever passes on to Calvary."

He got up and went out hastily, as though ashamed of his outburst; but Bernard sat on with folded arms and compressed lips, living over again those days and nights when he had stood in the streets and watched the human tide ebb and flow; the glad and the sorrowful, the sick and the whole; souls that



were at peace, and souls in hell. He was roused from his reverie by hearing a woman's voice uttering these words:

"I don't know why, but it fills me with pain and fear. Come away, dear; don't let us look at it to-day when we are so happy."

Bernard looked up, and saw a young couple standing side by side. The man was gazing intently at the picture, but after a while he yielded to the girl's tender, compelling touch upon his arm, and they moved away. Then Bernard got up and went home, filled with a strange dismay. To him, as to Arthur's knights, had come the vision of the Grail. Like them, he had sought to grasp it, and like them he had failed; and his failure had this tragic element—that it was not merely negative, but had brought a curse where he willed a blessing, and despair instead of hope.

He had done no work lately. Nearly every hour of the day found him at Hilda Verney's side, and the thought of her beauty was ceaselessly present with him.

Sometimes he would recall, with bitter self-contempt, his past, with its strivings and aspirations. Why had he not "enjoyed the merry shrove-tide of his youth," like other men, and *lived*? For alas! we can only be young once, and though it is a truism, we never realise its force until it is too late.

Amongst the Verney's acquaintances was a certain Sir William Arnford, of whom Bernard was violently jealous on account of the attention he paid to Hilda. The man was coarse and dissipated, but he had fallen, for the time being, under the spell of her beauty and that animal magnetism which women of her type possess, and which enables them to subdue any man whose fate brings him under its influence.

"Why do you let Arnford make love to you?" Bernard demanded of Hilda one day.

"I cannot help it," she answered.

"Yes, you can. Any woman can stop that sort of thing if she wants to. I don't like it, Hilda. I hate the man, and I wish you would not ask him here."

"Mother wouldn't like me to be rude to him."

"He shall never enter my house when we are married, I tell you that plainly."

Hilda flushed angrily, but she did not dare to reply, for she was afraid of Bernard. Possibly that was the reason of his attraction for her—the recognition of a brute for its master; for George Morris was right when he said Hilda had no soul. She was merely a very beautiful, healthy human animal, with a taste for luxurious living and second-rate society.



'COME AWAY, DEAR; DON'T LET US LOOK AT IT' "

George called at Bernard's rooms one morning and found him on the sofa looking desperately ill. His eyes were sunken and there was a blue tinge round his lips which startled and alarmed his friend.

"What is the matter with you, my dear old chap?" he asked.

"I believe I am dying, George. I get such ghastly thrills of pain sometimes.



They come and go quite suddenly, leaving me like this. Look here."

He stretched out his left hand. It was icy cold, and the finger-tips were blue. George took it as gently as a woman might have done.

"Let me go and fetch Kingley to have a look at you," he said.

"Oh, I don't want any doctors here; I don't believe in them."

"Nonsense! I shall go round to Kingley's at once and bring him back with me if possible."

With these words, George went out, returning in about half an hour with the doctor, who carefully examined Bernard, and asked him several questions.

"What is the matter with me?" demanded the latter, as the doctor was putting up his stethoscope.

"Heart disease," was the brief reply.

"Serious?"

"Decidedly so. What have you been doing lately?"

"Going to the devil."

"You'll reach your destination sooner than you expect if you don't pull up. Live as quietly as you can, and avoid all excitement, and every kind of physical exertion. You ought to leave London at once and spend at least six months in the country doing nothing."

He sat down and wrote a prescription, after which he took leave of Bernard and went out of the room, followed by George.

"*Angina pectoris*," he said in answer to the latter's inquiring look.

George uttered an exclamation of dismay.

"Is there no chance for him, doctor?"

"People who have it sometimes live for years," replied the doctor evasively.

"Do you think Ralston will?"

The other shook his head.

"He's engaged to be married," said George, half to himself.

"I'm very sorry to hear it," observed the doctor gravely as he took his departure.

George went back to his friend sick at heart.

"Don't look so dismal, old man," cried Bernard gaily. "Doctors are fools! They have no imagination; it is against the rules of medical etiquette. I know what is the matter with me, but

if I had told Kingley he'd have clapped me into a lunatic asylum. Wait a bit and I'll tell you all about it."

He got off the sofa and went to the sideboard from whence he took a decanter of brandy and a tumbler, into which he poured the spirit until it was nearly half full. Then, nodding to George, he swallowed the contents at a gulp.

"Good God!" exclaimed George. "I never saw you do such a thing before. What has come to you, Bernard? You never used to drink anything but water."

"I know. And I used to go in for plain living and high thinking, and now I eat and drink the best of everything, and think the thoughts of other men—and women. And I used to avoid society, and now I go into it as much as possible. My dear fellow I'm obliged to do so to supply the deficiency."

"What deficiency?"

"The deficiency of vital force. When I painted that accursed picture I put my very life into it. It is my own personality which emanates from it and affects everybody who looks at it. *You* have felt it yourself, have you not?"

George was sitting with his elbows on his knees and his head resting on his hands. He made no reply.

"Well," resumed Bernard, "the result is that there is not enough vital force left in me to carry on my physical existence—to keep the machinery going, in short; so I am obliged to obtain the necessary energy from other people. When I am alone, I become as I was when you first came in; but, as you see, I'm a different man since you and Kingley have been here. The reason is simple enough. You have both supplied me with some of your own vitality, and the brandy has for the time being completed the cure."

He took a few turns up and down the room and then glanced at the clock.

"Six, by Jove! And I promised to dine with Hilda and some friends at the Savoy, and go to a theatre afterwards. Excuse me, old man, I must go and dress."

"Not to-night, Bernard," pleaded George. "Let me take a message to say you are seedy."



"Rot! There's nothing the matter with me, I tell you. Of course I shall go. That brute Arnford will be there, and will be making love to Hilda if I'm out of the way. I wish heaven would provide me with a decent excuse for kicking the cad," he concluded as he left the room.

At his club the following morning George met an acquaintance, who inquired—

"How is Ralston to-day?"

"I have not seen him," replied George. "Why do you ask?"

"Don't you know what happened last night?"

"No."

"Well, Ralston came into the Haymarket with a party of friends. They had a box and half a dozen stalls, and Ralston went into the box with Miss Verney and her mother and aunt. In the middle of the performance he was taken suddenly ill, and everybody thought he was going to die. They got him out into the passage, and a couple of doctors were fetched out of the audience. One of these chaps at once exclaimed, '*Oh, angina pectoris, undoubtedly.*' Stupid fool! I suppose he wanted to show what a smart fellow he was. Anyway, Ralston heard it. They gave him a lot of brandy, and after that he seemed to get a little better, and then two fellows went out and got a cab, and took him home."

"What did Miss Verney do?"

"Exhibited a most becoming mixture of distress and fortitude, and then went back to her seat, and apparently enjoyed the third act. Arnford joined her, and she seemed to find his attentions eminently consoling."

George's right hand clenched instinctively, and he ground his teeth, but he made no remark. He told the porter to call a cab, and drove off to his friend's rooms. Bernard was sitting up in bed, writing. To George's inquiries he answered that he was much better, and picking up a letter tossed it over to him.

"Just read that," he said, and George read the following:—

"SIR—It may interest you to learn, that by one person, at least, your work has been thoroughly understood and appreciated. There was a time, not so very long ago, when I

cherished a few delusions, and allowed myself to speculate hopefully concerning life and death. I was miserable, and I was unfortunate, but I did not wholly despair. Then, one day, I went to see your picture, '*Via Dolorosa*,' and the scales fell from my eyes. What a masterpiece it is! It must have brought tears of joy to the eyes of the Devil, as he stood beside you—I wonder if he guided your hand?—and watched you paint the face of that Christ! I suppose I ought to be grateful to you; yet, strange to say, I am not. The destruction of my idols has made life even more unbearable than it was before. So I have resolved to end it. I don't want to live any longer. Above all, I don't want to think any more. If you are interested in my fate—and, considering the circumstances, it is just possible that you may be—a glance at your newspaper to-morrow will satisfy your curiosity, and assure you of the genuine nature of this document."

Then came an address and the signature.

George silently put down the letter, and Bernard pointed to a paper which lay upon the table. George took it up, and read a brief paragraph which stated that Stephen Clements, supposed to be a gentleman of independent means, had committed suicide by taking poison in his lodgings the previous afternoon.

"Don't let this worry you, Bernard," he said, throwing down the paper.

"Of course not. What's done cannot be undone, unfortunately. But I'm going to prevent its ever happening again."

As he spoke, he handed his friend the letter he had just written.

George glanced at it. It was a request to the Hanging Committee to immediately return the picture, "*Via Dolorosa*."

"They will never consent," he exclaimed. "That picture is the attraction of the whole Exhibition. Is it likely they will give it up?"

"If they don't, I shall go and take it," said Bernard. "Just post that note for me, like a good fellow, and then come back. I want to ask you a question."

When George returned, Bernard said to him,

"Come here and sit where I can see your face. I want you to tell me something," he continued, as George took the seat indicated. "When I had that queer attack last night, I heard one of the doctors say that I had *angina pectoris*. Now, did Kingley tell you that



yesterday? Look me in the eyes, George, and tell me straight out if he did or did not say so?"

The other hesitated and paused.

"George, for God's sake, tell me the truth. Come, yes or no?"

"Yes," answered George, turning his face away.

"Then I'm a dying man."

"No, no! He said that people who had it often lived for years."

"But I shall not."

"Yes, you will, if you only take care of yourself."

"George, my friend, I know that I shall not; and you know it too as well as I do. To-morrow I shall go to a specialist and settle the matter once and for all. Now, don't let us talk about it any more. I don't want to think about it."

When George came round to Bernard's rooms the following morning, he found him up and dressed.

"That infernal Committee refuses to return my picture," he said; "so I have just been making arrangements to remove it without their permission."

"Are you mad, Bernard? There will be the very devil of a row."

"I don't care. As soon as the gallery is open this morning, I shall go and superintend the removal of my property."

"And when you get the picture back, what will you do with it?"

"Destroy it. And after that, George, I shall paint another picture, a symbolical picture, which will make my name and fortune; and I shall call it, 'The Triumph of the Flesh.'"

Next evening the contents bills of all the newspapers announced the "Extraordinary Conduct of an Artist." "Remarkable Scene in a Picture Gallery." "Threatened Action for damages."

Bernard's *coup* had proved eminently successful. Immediately the gallery opened he had made his appearance with half-a-dozen packers and a covered van, and, in spite of the expostulations of the attendants, he had taken down and removed his picture.

The affair caused a considerable sensation, and the majority of people seemed to think that Bernard would find himself involved in very serious

difficulties with the committee. Several journalists tried to interview him on the subject, but he shut himself up in his studio and refused to see anybody; and when a wealthy banker wrote, offering him a very large sum for the picture, he refused in an extremely curt note, saying that he was not Judas.

George called at his rooms several times, but was always told that he was at the studio. Once he ventured to go there, but the man in charge told him that Mr. Ralston was at work, and had given strict orders that no one was to be admitted. Bernard had a peculiar objection to being visited at his studio, especially if he was engaged on a picture, and George did not insist, but he felt sorely anxious.

One morning, he was at Charing Cross Station, seeing off some friends by the early train, when he observed Hilda Verney and her mother on the platform, so he went forward to speak to them.

Both looked rather confused, and Mrs. Verney said,

"I daresay you are surprised to see us here, Mr. Morris. The fact is," she lowered her voice slightly—"we thought it advisable to take dear Hilda away for a few weeks. Naturally she feels it a good deal, although, of course, it is all for the best."

George looked bewildered. "I don't understand," he said.

"Haven't you heard that the engagement has been broken off?"

"No, I had not heard it," rejoined George, stiffly.

"We are going to Switzerland for a month," resumed Mrs. Verney, "and then we may return home, or we may go on to Nice for the winter. Dear Hilda has behaved very sensibly and bravely about it all. Mr. Ralston wished to see her after he had been to the specialist, but she wrote and said that an interview would be too painful both for herself and for him, and she told him she felt it was her duty to consult the wishes of myself and her aunt in such a very serious matter. Of course it would have been highly wrong for them to marry after what the specialist told him. I should never have allowed her to engage herself to him



had I known he was so exceedingly delicate. And then, what a way he has behaved about that picture! I hear, too, he has refused an enormous sum for it. Such madness! Surely a man in his position cannot afford to throw away hundreds of pounds like that? A mother must think of her daughter's future, you know, Mr. Morris."

"Undoubtedly she must, Mrs. Verney," returned George. "I see Sir William Arnford has just arrived, and as I presume he has come to see you off—or possibly accompany you, I will not permit myself to intrude, but will wish you good-bye and a pleasant journey."

He took off his hat with somewhat elaborate courtesy and walked away. In the Strand he met Bernard, and persuaded him with some difficulty to go and lunch with him at his club. Afterwards, as the smoking-room was rather full, they strolled down to Bernard's rooms for a talk.

"I suppose you know?" he said suddenly, as he drew forward a chair and sat down opposite his friend.

George nodded, and began filling his pipe. He did not look up.

"Who told you?"

"Mrs. Verney. I saw them this morning on the platform at Charing Cross. They were just starting for Switzerland."

Bernard got up and walked about the room for a while. Then he sat down by the table, and buried his face in his hands. George went over and stood beside him.

"She wasn't fit to black your boots," he said gruffly.

"I did not love her for her worthiness or unworthiness. It was nothing to me if she possessed all the virtues of a saint or all the vices of a devil incarnate. I loved her because she was so beautiful. God, how beautiful she was! You can't understand that," he continued, after a pause. "You think it strange—almost wicked, in fact—that a man should fall down and worship mere physical perfection. You say I should not have loved her if she had not been beautiful, and you are quite right. But it seems to me the most natural thing in the world. Do you remember, it says somewhere in the Bible that at one time

the daughters of men were so wondrously fair that the sons of God left Heaven to love and wed them. I firmly believe that story; it bears truth on the very face of it. I, too, would have sold my soul to possess Hilda—ah, and would still! I only wish the Devil would give me a chance."

George said nothing, but he remained standing by Bernard, looking down upon him with an expression of infinite pity in his grave, kind eyes. There must have been something soothing in his strong, quiet presence, for after a time Bernard lifted his head.

"What a fool I am!" he said. "You're a good fellow, George, to put up with me as you do!"

The other rested his hand for a moment on his friend's shoulder. Then he went back to his place.

"I have been painting hard all this week," resumed Bernard, "and this morning I took my penknife and ripped the canvas in pieces."

"Have you destroyed——"

"'Via Dolorosa?' No. I can't."

George had an appointment that afternoon, and as soon as he had gone Bernard took a cab and drove back to his studio. He was feeling better than he had done for some weeks past, and ran upstairs with something of his old alertness. The sun was streaming into the room, and he threw open the window and stood there for a few moments, drinking in the air and the light.

On the floor lay the fragments of a large canvas. It was the picture of which Bernard had spoken to George—the picture which was to have been called "The Triumph of the Flesh."

Leaning against the wall and almost filling half one side of the studio was the "Via Dolorosa."

Bernard took a clean canvas and set it on an easel in the middle of the room. Then with a pencil he began rapidly sketching in the outlines of a woman's figure. Steadily and surely the pencil moved, making bold, even lines and curves, and in a very short space of time a beautiful nude figure stood revealed like a faint shadow.

He took up his palette and brushes and began to paint; but now the steady hand wavered, and from time to time he



paused and glanced nervously over his shoulder. Something seemed to be drawing him slowly, but with irresistible force, away from the easel. His face flushed and his breath came in long sighs; and then suddenly he yielded and turned away, and as he did so his eyes met the eyes of the Christ in the picture. For a long time he stood and looked into them, and the light that poured in from the skylight and window began to fail a little. At last the intense silence was broken by a slight movement. Bernard had begun to paint.

The studio grew dusk, but Bernard never heeded the fading light. His eyes looked straight before him—not at, but as if through the canvas. Yet his hand never faltered, nor did he pause for a single instant. *And the face of the Christ slowly changed!*

The artist stood and beheld his ideal,

and no language that has ever been written or spoken can describe that moment of realisation.

The brush fell from Bernard's hands; he looked upon his work and sank to his knees.

A great sob broke from him, and the tears filled his eyes and overflowed. He clasped his hands above his head and cried aloud:

“Not the Way of Sorrows, but the Way of Life! Not Calvary, but the Vision of God!”

Ah, that sudden, smiting pain! He sprang to his feet and staggered across the room, swaying from side to side.

A second or two of mortal agony, the sound of many waters; then darkness and blinding light; and Bernard Ralston fell, just under the little green mark on the wall which had the form of a cross.

The end had come—or shall we say the beginning?



“THE END HAD COME”